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Genre and Empire: Historical Romance and Sixteenth-Century Chinese Cultural Fantasies

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Abstract

Chinese historical romance blossomed and matured in the sixteenth century when the Ming empire was increasingly vulnerable at its borders and its people increasingly curious about exotic cultures. The project analyzes three types of historical romances, i.e., military romances *Romance of Northern Song* and *Romance of the Yang Family Generals* on northern Song's campaigns with the Khitans, magic-travel romance *Journey to the West* about Tang monk Xuanzang's pilgrimage to India, and a hybrid romance *Eunuch Sanbao's Voyages* on the Indian Ocean relating to Zheng He's maritime journeys and Japanese piracy. The project focuses on the trope of exogamous desire of foreign princesses and undomestic women to marry Chinese and social elite men, and the trope of cannibalism to discuss how the expansionist and fluid imagined community created by the fiction shared between the narrator and the reader convey sentiments of proto-nationalism, imperialism, and pleasure. Contextualizing the fiction in its contemporary political discourses and its literary evolution in history, the dissertation concentrates on fictional images, i.e., religious practitioners, women, demons, and categories of barbarians. It argues that the historical romances have self-healing and self-assuring characteristics. They sublimate history into tales of triumphs, jokes, games, references, and historical reversions, and thus allow readers to imagine an invincible imperial history. This study brings into light the importance literature plays as a cultural response to China's long history of cross-border military and cultural encounters with her Eurasian neighbors.

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GENRE AND EMPIRE: HISTORICAL ROMANCE AND SIXTEENTH-
CENTURY CHINESE CULTURAL FANTASIES

Yuanfei Wang

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GENRE AND EMPIRE: HISTORICAL ROMANCE AND SIXTEENTH-
CENTURY CHINESE CULTURAL FANTASIES

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Yuanfei Wang

In Memory of my beloved maternal grandmother, a Hakka woman and a genius
storyteller,
Cai Fengjiao 蔡鳳嬌 (1921-2007)

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ABSTRACT

GENRE AND EMPIRE: HISTORICAL ROMANCE AND SIXTEENTH- CENTURY CHINESE CULTURAL FANTASIES

Yuanfei Wang

Victor H. Mair

Historical romance blossomed and matured in the sixteenth century when the Ming empire was increasingly vulnerable at its borders and its people increasingly curious about exotic cultures. The project analyzes three types of historical romances, i.e., military romances *Romance of Northern Song* and *Romance of the Yang Family Generals* on northern Song's campaigns with the Khitans, magic-travel romance *Journey to the West* about Tang monk Xuanzang's pilgrimage to India, and a hybrid romance *Eunuch Sanbao's Voyages on the Indian Ocean* relating to Zheng He's maritime journeys and Japanese piracy. The project focuses on the trope of exogamous desire of foreign princesses and undomestic women to marry Chinese and social elite men, and the trope of cannibalism to discuss how the expansionist and fluid imagined community created by the fiction shared between the narrator and the reader convey sentiments of proto-nationalism, imperialism, and pleasure. Contextualizing the fiction in its contemporary political discourses and its literary evolution in history, the dissertation concentrates on fictional images, i.e., religious practitioners, women, demons, and categories of barbarians. It argues that the historical romances have self-healing and self-assuring characteristics. They sublimate history into tales of triumphs, jokes, games, references, and historical reversions, and thus allow readers to imagine an invincible imperial history.

This study brings into light the importance literature plays as a cultural response to China's long history of cross-border military and cultural encounters with her Eurasian neighbors.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION: ROMANCE, MARRIAGE, GENDER IN THE SIXTEENTH
CENTURY MING EMPIRE

The China of the sixteenth century witnessed a number of trends that threatened its Sino-centric worldview; encroaching Japanese pirates, Mongols, Manchus, and the wide circulation of Matteo Ricci's world map within the empire are the most notable examples. Sixteenth century Ming China has also been characterized as an age of "burgeoning capitalism" (ziben zhuyi mengya 資本主義萌芽) even though the term has been a subject of much dispute. Scholars argue that China underwent commercialization galvanized by a global economy, social transformation, and a philosophical and literary evolution similar to her European counterpart.¹

Meanwhile, the major historical romances of the period drew upon the long cultural memory of China's cross-border warfare and cross-cultural religious exchanges: *Romance of the Northern Song* (Bei Song zhizhuan 北宋志傳, hereafter *RNS*) (circa 1594) recounts the saga of the Yang family of generals who participated in the war between the Northern Song and the Khitan Liao from 950 to 1050. *The Water Margin* 水滸傳 (circa 1560s) portrays 108 loyal warriors occupying an anti-government camp, with the tale set against the backdrop of the wars between the Southern Song and the Jurchen Jin in the 12th and 13th centuries. *Journey to the West* (Xiyou ji 西遊記, hereafter *JW*)

¹ See R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Kenneth Pomeranz, *Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). Andrew Plak, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*. Princeton (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987). Tina Lu, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

(1592) depicts the legend of the Tang monk Tripitaka's pilgrimage to India to obtain Mahayana sutras. Evolving from their respective dramatic and performative predecessors, these stories established generic conventions for fiction and drama that later times would follow. One major example is the hybrid romance *Vernacular Romance of Eunuch Sanbao's Voyages to the Western Ocean* (Sanbao taijian xiyangji tongsu yanyi 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義, hereafter *SVW*) (1598), which draws upon both *RNS* and *JW* to retell the story of Zheng He's seven legendary maritime voyages across the Indian Ocean during the mid-Ming.

RNS, *Yang Jiafu shidai zhongyong yanyi* 楊家府世代忠勇演義 (*Romance of the Yang Family Generals*) (*RYF*), *JW*, and *SVW* are the major fictional texts that this dissertation analyzes. Within these stories, there is a consistent storyline--a legendary general or monk from pre-late Ming Chinese history leads his armies or disciples through an epic journey in a mission for the emperor. They move across the borderlands of the empire and beyond to conduct military and magical campaigns against their barbarian or demonic enemies, aiming to either restore an all-encompassing empire or to spread Buddhism.

This consistent storyline, and its tropes of magical and military battles consist of mysterious battle arrays, magic contests, magical weapons, miraculous female warriors, and cannibalistic and female demons. These elements serve as *metaphors* for individual authors' and readers' cultural sentiments on cross-border conflicts and mobility.

Paradoxically, these topoi are related to the sentiments of affinity and antagonism, the fundamentals of which are filial piety and loyalty. To be more specific, in *RNS*, female warriors and foreign princesses are married into the Yang family and function as magical

saviors that allow the Yang generals to overcome dire situations, reconciling the tension between the family and the state in times of foreign aggression. In *JW*, Tripitaka's monstrous animal disciples, Monkey, Piggy, Sandy, and White Horse, are recruited to be his students in order for him to overcome all the demons that he encounters along the road to India. *SVW*, on the other hand, recounts that the Yongle emperor hires Golden Blue Peak, a monk whose previous life is a Buddha in the Western Heaven, a Taoist Master, and the Islamic eunuch Zheng He to set out on a mission to conquer the countries of the Indian Ocean. All these communities suggest social, religious, and racial heterogeneousness.

More importantly, these heterogeneous communities in 16th-century romances are more saliently based upon horizontal relationships than vertical hierarchical relationships. The marital loyalty of the female warriors is also written as based upon marital love, a manifestation of the late-Ming cultural ideal of *qing*, validating a kind of exogamous desire at work. The disciple-master relationship is loosely defined in *JW*. Oftentimes it is the vulnerable and pedantic Tripitaka who relies on his disciples for personal safety and even Buddhist wisdom. Additionally, there is the underlying driving force of carnal desire—the desire for flesh or cannibalism, the desire for food, the desire for sex, and exogamous marriage, and the desire for “treasure objects” (*baobei* 寶貝) among humans, demons, and even some deities in *JW*. In the plot, demons have such desires because they want to cultivate themselves into becoming immortals. More rhetorically, the desire is often expressed in the form of verbal jokes by Monkey and through the carnivalesque image of Piggy. These jokes dissolve the boundary between “us” and “them” and re-imagine a community different from the one constructed in the fiction. The cannibalistic

and carnal desire featured in *JW* and the marital love and exogamous desire featured in *RNS* are fused together in *SVW*, which imagines an imperialistic and aggressive Chinese empire to which all foreign states are forced to submit tribute to and acknowledge as their superior in diplomatic relations. The fundamental impetus of such an empire, however, is the incessant circulation of commodities and object-like foreign peoples, which assumes a “quasi-equality” between “us” and “them.” The fiction creates similar exogamous marriages on Java, mirroring the kind of marriage going on in China, yet the fictional ideology and narrative reassert imperial identity through moral discrimination and carnage.

This dissertation attempts to focus on the tropes of exogamous marriage, cannibalism, and fetishized objects that run through *RNS*, *RYF*, *JW*, and *SVW*, to discuss the formation of a “genre,” or the elements of a generic convention—elements of what I term as “historical romance”-- at the end of the sixteenth century. By “genre,” I follow Frederic Jameson’s definition: genres are “essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.”² By this he means that it is the immediacy of the “speech acts of daily life” and their “intonation, gesturality, contextual deictics and pragmatics” or “performance situation” that ensure an appropriate reception for the literature, which in turn establishes generic conventions. By deduction, the commercial publication of texts that divorce live performance from the audience consequently broadens the generic rules that are understood by readers. For Jameson, the rhetoric of a genre has implications for its audience.

² Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University press, 1981) 106.

In this study, the trope of exogamous desire as embodied by the image of female warriors, which emerged from *RYF*, and which was appropriated in *RNS*--both of which are commercial texts adapted from drama—suggest a shifting paradigm or a new generic rule through which readers understood the saga of the Yang family generals in the sixteenth century in a new way. I argue that the new form of *RNS* is pregnant with quasi-nationalistic sentiments in its imagination of a state in crisis. Furthermore, dramatically diverting from and at the same time inheriting its performative tradition, *JW*'s magical battles with demons during a quest journey is marked with the multifarious aspects of sexual desire--cannibalism, sexuality, voracity, and fetishism. The new narrative paradigm of *JW* is further absorbed into such fantasy fiction (shenmo xiaoshuo 神魔小說), including *Xiyou bu* 西遊補 (*Sequel to Journey to the West*) and *Dongyou ji* 東遊記 (*Journey to the East*), fiction about a soul's travels across the three realms, such as *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (*Dream of the Red Chamber*), and scholars' fantastic overseas travel such as *Jing hua yuan* 鏡花緣 (*Flowers in the Mirror*). However abstract and allegorical the world of *JW* is, what it suggests is the simultaneity of traveling around world and the internal transformation of the psyche and selfhood. Moreover, one of the most salient examples of how commercialization “emancipates” artwork from generic restriction, or how commercialization may deteriorate generic form is *SVW*, which appropriates both the tropes of the female warrior and the magical battle in its fictional space to form imperialist or Chauvinist sentiments that channel the anxieties of the author as well as the age that he lives in.

Exogamous Marriage and Global Imagination

This dissertation positions the stories studied into a larger cross-cultural and transnational historical context to discuss global imagination through an analysis of exogamous marriage, cannibalism, and sexuality. In recent years, literary critics of medieval and early modern English and European literature have focused on the genre of romance to discuss its vital role in interacting with the West's colonial discourses and global imagination. Geraldine Heng argues that the Constance romances function to transform medieval England's vulnerability in front of the sultan's political military strength into erotic and cultural power as victory.³ Ania Loomba, on the other hand, analyzes how Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* serves as a depository storehouse in which the beliefs of "race" are drawn upon "arbitrarily and contradictorily" to utilize both elite and popular ideas, and both conventional and new knowledge.⁴ The tragic marriage between the converted Moorish soldier Othello and Desdemona, a white Christian woman, not only "responds to" sixteenth-century anxieties about tensions between blackness, culture and religious differences, but also "plays upon" the "ambiguities and contradictions" of Muslims as perceived by some English who were tolerant of them, some who hated Spanish racism, and those who were Protestants and Catholics in Spain (105). Benedict S. Robinson further analyzes how Shakespeare's three plays, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *The Tempest*, appropriate, transform, and suppress the medieval romance of exogamous desire to explore questions of global and cross-cultural contact. He argues that concentrating on the genre of romance can reveal England's "global imagination and ideological struggles", which are otherwise invisible to the lens

³ Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁴ Ania Loomba, "Othello and the Racial Question," *Shakespeare, Race, Colonialism* (Oxford University Press, 2002) 109.

of colonial discourses.⁵ In the cosmopolitan city of Venice, Shylock's "infidel" daughter Jessica's marriage with Lorenzo, a white Christian, and the Christian princess Portia's potential marital liaisons with her suitors from the world invoke a contradictory moment when England was more anxious about a global presence while the universalistic notion of a global Christendom continued to persist. On the other hand, whereas *Othello* imagines a civilized European culture where racial differences become tenuous, *The Tempest*, by making the marriage of Claribel to the king of Tunis as the background of a story that triggers the journey of Alonso and his entourage to the small island where Prospero and Miranda, Ariel and Caliban have been living, suggests a different set of global identities, hardening an astute notion of Caliban's racial identity (84).

What this study on Chinese fiction can contribute to the topic of "global imagination" is an analysis on how individual Chinese stories' appropriation of the tropes of exogamous marriage, cannibalism, and sexuality helped readers envision empire, religion, world order, and foreign peoples in the sixteenth century. This study also hopes to analyze how the vocabulary of sexuality, marriage, and gender rephrase the collective memory of the history of cross-border encounters to inform readers about the cultural, imperial, and religious identities of their times. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said proposes that the influence of the imperial past on the present should be studied as one researches both the histories of the dominator and the dominated in the empire.⁶ My dissertation follows a similar line of thinking by discussing the ways 16th-century people

⁵ Benedict S. Robinson, "Leaving Claribel," *Islam and Early Modern English Literature: the Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2007) 57-193.

⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1994) 24.

remembered the conjuncture moments in Chinese dynastic history, focusing on both sides of the story.

Scholarship on Chinese imperialism and its legacy mainly concentrate on the Qing Empire and modern China. Emma Teng analyzes the “Oriental Orientalism” present in Qing officials’ travel writing on the Qing colony of Taiwan by emphasizing how the literature produced during the territorial expansion of the Qing tends to portray an “imagined geography” concerned more with defining “our land” than the “space out there.”⁷ Pamela Crossley has noted that this imperial and ideological centralization of the Qing Empire created racial terms such as “Manchu” and “Chinese.”⁸ However, scholarship on the Ming empire--whose imperial identity has been overshadowed by the Mongol Yuan Empire and obscured by the Ming’s frequent border issues--is scant.

The late Ming Empire is a different story. The legacy that the various dynasties and reigns left to the late Ming Empire is complicated. First, the Northern Song, Southern Song, and the Mongol Yuan dynasty, in terms of the fact that the Chinese of this period were largely subject to the invasion and domination of northern nomadic tribes, was remembered in the late Ming as a shameful history. Sentiments of self-defense were prominent. Second, the short-lived glory of Zheng He’s voyages across the Indian Ocean in the mid-Ming was remembered and even idealized in the late Ming as exemplifying imperial domination over the periphery. Third, beyond the specifics of historical evidence, there was a theoretical or general dimension in Chinese thought concerning the manner in which foreign states were to be dealt. That is, China’s diplomacy of

⁷ Emma Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683-1895* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁸ Pamela Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

“cherishing men from afar” appears to be the opposite of imperialism because it denies direct control of other states, rather, it maintains a loose “tributary” relationship with foreign countries mainly through upon commerce. On the other hand, there is Confucian culturalism, which simultaneously assumes Chinese civilization can acculturate “barbaric” cultures, while also fearing contamination with “barbaric” cultures. The concept of alliance marriage is one that was perceived as political capitulation and cultural shame even though the marriage of Princess Wencheng with Songtsän Gampo in the Tang dynasty is celebrated in Chinese textbooks as a medium for the successful spread of Buddhism and Chinese culture to Tibet. Literature and art also picked up the popular sentiment on alliance marriages, making gender the most prominent trope for representing cross-cultural encounters. Thus, at various historical junctures, when China was invaded by the Khitans, Huns, and Mongols, the image of women is used to represent the tremendously shameful memory of cultural contamination and political domination. Stories, poems, paintings, and music about Wang Zhaojun 王昭君 and Cai Wenji 蔡文姬 are salient examples. In 16th-century military romances, the trope of exogamous marriage not only entailed non-domestic women marrying the social elite, but also foreign princesses leaving their fathers to marry Chinese generals. These tropes were developed up to the 18th century and beyond. Suggesting an aggressive assimilation of the periphery, it is something similar to “imperialism.” This trope is also a prototype of modern “nationalistic” sentiments.

Furthermore, the tropes of exogamous marriage, cannibalism, and sexuality present in the magic-travel romance *JW* suggests how Confucian culturalism and empire can be naturalized, however, it is implied through the binary of human and non-human.

For instance, the queen of the Country of Women's attempted exogamous marriage with Tripitaka in *JW* for his handsomeness and his Chinese-ness as well as the narrator's emphasis on his ugly-looking animal disciples that "are not Chinese" (tangchao renwu 唐朝人物) presume the importance of physiognomy as the fundamental marker of culturalism. In the late Ming, sexuality and marriage go hand in hand to further manifest the attractiveness of culture. Yet what *JW* represents is everything that is not "culture": demons and cannibalism. The politics of cannibalism in *JW* is utilized to naturalize culture, and to fetishize demons and their desire for immortality to elicit laughter. The jokes' descriptive language is derived from habitual daily activities such as eating, forming the foundation for a subjunctive space shared by the psychological and sociological community of the narrator and the reader. Out of the literati's everyday vicarious journeys of reading at home, pleasure derived from the storytelling and reading undermines moral identities, shifting the boundary between humanity and monstrosity, and re-imagining a world out of the empire that is constructed by everyday ritual activities galvanized by commercialization.

In light of Edward Said's point on the "residues of imperialism" on the present, this study also treats Buddhism as a kind of universalistic ideology (in that Buddhism assumes that everyone in the universe can become a Buddha or a monk) and how the legacy of Mahayana Buddhism promoted by Tang Xuanzang is reflected upon in *JW*. First, the cultural and literary tradition of *JW* illustrates well how empire and religion are mutually dependent on each other. The multi-cultural and multi-ethnic literary geography in the performative precursors of *JW*, from the Tang transformation text *Subduing of the Demons*, *Datang Sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話, to *Xiyou ji zaju* 西遊記雜

劇, manifests the intertwined relationship between empire and religion that was present from the Tang and Song, to the Yuan empires. Second, in the Buddhist cosmos where there is no center or multiple centers, sexuality, desire, and marriage, are to be renounced and despised. Tracing the emergence and evolution of the opposing images of Sandy and Monkey in the lore of “Journey to the West,” one detects that the tropes of marriage, sexuality, and cannibalism in the images’ evolution are intricately related to geography, transnational mobility, and imperial policies.

Instead of focusing on China as the center of narration, exogamous marriage in *SVW* centers on Java and the Javanese general Gnash Sea Dry and Witch Wang from Bolin, the subordinate state of Java. The defense of their countries through their alliance marriage is violently suppressed by King Yama with the cliché excuse of the Buddhist notion of karmic retribution. What is implied is the existence of two sets of values in the fiction: cultural relativism and universalism, which is like an imperialist regime that “universalizes themselves, [and] they regard[s] any insurgency against themselves as necessarily provincial” (Said 48). This sentiment of imperialism in *SVW* is developed upon in the 16th-century discourse on Zheng He’s voyages in the Indian Ocean during the Yongle reign, which was fostered by the maritime peril caused by Japanese piracy, which was part of the global economy in the sixteenth century.

Historians have examined Han Chinese’s acculturation of ethnic communities such as Muslims and Mongols,⁹ the Ming people’s perception of Southeast Asian people

⁹ Henry Serruys, *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu Period (1368-1398)* (New York, 1955). Jonathan Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

during their frequent maritime activities in the Indian Ocean,¹⁰ and the imperial campaigns against Japanese piracy as well as the court-sponsored voyages of Zheng He.¹¹ This dissertation, however, argues, that it is through fiction that we are able to much more clearly see how 16th-century Chinese authors, readers, and commentators imagined and described the Ming Empire, previous empires, and the world, through the use of specific rhetorical strategies.

Gender, Romance, and Empire in Sixteenth Century Ming China

The sixteenth century witnessed a remarkable intellectual and cognitive change towards epistemological eclecticism, which idealized “the other” as an effective rhetorical strategy for exploring aspects of the body, group identity, and the human subject. I define eclecticism in the terms of Timothy Brook, who sees late Ming cultural and religious syncretism as a kind of eclecticism in which reconciliation or blending is not necessary.¹² That is, late Ming culture gradually changed to draw resemblance and likeness between things in the universe that traditionally had been considered as inherently different or in opposing categories.

¹⁰ For Chinese conceptions and images of maritime Asia, see: Roderich Ptak, *China and the Asian Seas: Trade, Travel, and Visions of the Other (1400-1750)* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998); for images of Southeast Asia in Ming sources, see: Gionatella Guida, *Immagini del Nanyang. Realtà e stereotipi nella storiografia cinese verso la fine della dinastia Ming* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1991); for images of Zheng He and his maritime voyages on the Indian Ocean, see: Claudine Salmon, *Zheng He: Images and Perceptions* (Harrassowitz, 2005); about how borders played the role in late imperial China's perception and management of other peoples, see Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak, *China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997).

¹¹ See Kwan-wai So, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China During the 16th Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1975), and Geoff Wade, “The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment.” *JMBRAS*, Vol. LXXVIII Pt. 1, 2005, 37-58.

¹² Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) 184-185.

A symbolic intellectual foundation for this transforming episteme is Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529). After being exiled to the aboriginal southwestern periphery of the Ming Empire at Guizhou 貴州 in 1508 for having rivaled a powerful eunuch at court, he realized that universal coherence or li 理 cannot be found in either the center or the periphery of the world but rather in one's own mind. Unlike the Neo-Confucian Master Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), who regards human nature as a corrective to the human mind (xin 心), Wang Yangming proposes that the human mind "is" (ji 即 or shi 是) innate knowing (*liangzhi* 良知), which as the fundamental aspect (ti 體) of the mind, represents good moral human nature.¹³ Even though he considers Buddhism's classification of human nature as a failure to value human action, Wang Yangming's synthesis and identification of moral knowing (zhi 知) with moral action (xing 行) in human subjectivity¹⁴ potentially induces different interpretations of the mind, which can draw references from Taoist and Buddhist concepts of meditation and enlightenment.¹⁵ For instance, his disciple Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583) makes an analogy between Taoist transcendental emptiness, Buddhist stillness, and Confucian human nature, arguing for the existence of a unified origin of the Three Teachings (sanjiao guiyi 三教歸一).¹⁶

If Wang Yangming's focus on human interiority rather than intellectuality and externality furnished an affinity between religions, then the concomitant rising of the cult of qing 情 spectacularly elevated the feminine yin, and the idea of desire that is

¹³ See Wang Yangming, *Chuanxi lu* 傳習錄, ed. Ye Shaojun 葉紹鈞, Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1967, p.257. Also see Peter Bol's "Confucian Learning in Late Ming Thought" in *Cambridge History of China, Ming Dynasty. vol. 8. 1368-1644*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 708-788.

¹⁴ See *Chuanxi lu*, p. 11.

¹⁵ See Huang Zongxi, *Mingru xuean* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju: Xinhua shudian Beijing faxing, 2008).

¹⁶ For ideological syncretism in late Ming, see Edward T. Ch'ien's "The Problem" in *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 1-30.

associated with it--sexy libertines, virtuous courtesans, passionate and chaste wives, and romantic scholars-- to manifest a cultural ideal. Maram Epstein connects the idealized feminine image to the notion of the beloved object of connoisseurship that narcissistically reflects the male subject's aesthetic taste.¹⁷ Giovanni Vitiello focuses on the "syncretic processes" of the ideal male model that blends together both the romantic scholar and the chivalric hero in the cultural imagination. He regards this gender hybridity as "a pointed response to a perceived crisis of Confucian masculinity," a crisis that began in the late Ming and lasted till late eighteenth century.¹⁸ However, he did not specify what sort of crisis was occurring in the sixteenth century.

This study, however, shows that the explosive experimentations on the microcosmic subjects of desire, sexuality, emotion, and love, are accompanied with the concomitant enthusiasm of connecting the internal microcosm with the macrocosmic externality--the family, the community, society, and the empire at large. The connection between the interior and the exterior is best shown in the vernacular fiction that blossomed in the prosperity of commercial printing in the late Ming. Keith McMahon states that vernacular fiction is the process of boundary-crossing between the state of self-containment as an internal and the subjective state of equilibrium. The internal world can be made to "transition to" (rusun 入樵) or be "mirrored by" (zhaoying 照應) the external world. That includes the world of romance and the world of warfare, and the boundary

¹⁷ Maram Epstein's *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2001) 92.

¹⁸ Giovanni Vitiello, *Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) 8-11.

between masters and slaves.¹⁹ The aesthetics of this linkage is “sensational” in the sense that it is the interior that is the locus of sensuality and libidinous energy that urges the self to compete with the containment of social order.²⁰ Nevertheless, in the end containment will not be abandoned.

Similar to the comic and sensational rhetoric of late Ming fiction that shattered the equilibrium of the containment of the subject in the fictional world, the late Ming empire indeed witnessed a crisis in its increasingly infringed upon “walls” at its northern and southern frontiers and, on its the internal borders. The eastern Mongols, who after the defeat of the Yuan dynasty had retreated north of China, began again to threaten northern China, resulting in 1550 in an assault upon Beijing that punctured the well-defined border and wrested commercial agreements from the Ming court.²¹ Along the southeastern coast, a state of maritime disorder prevailed owing to the mobility of a global economy enabled by the connection of the South China Sea with the Indian Ocean and beyond. 1563 saw the peak of Japanese pirate attacks, against which three lieutenant-colonels were appointed to strengthen coastal defenses.²² Despite these trends, it is surprising to observe the slack and unstable military defensive system of the Ming, considering that the importance of the civil service of scholar officials was over-emphasized.²³ The rise of

¹⁹ Keith McMahon, *Causality and Containment in the Seventeenth Century Chinese Fiction* (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1988) 130.

²⁰ Ibid, 60.

²¹ Pamela Kyle Crossley, “Making Mongols,” *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*. eds. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

²² Ng Chin-keong, “Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion and Hai-fang,” *China and Her Neighbors: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy 10th to 19th Century*. Eds. Sabie Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz) 1997.

²³ See Peter Allan Lorge, “The politics of imperial collapse, 1435-1610,” *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China 900-1795* (London; Routledge, 2005) 119-138.

super-determined generals like Qi Jiguang 戚繼光 (1528-1588), who devised new strategies in leading volunteer armies, which successfully defeated Japanese pirates and Mongols, was stymied at the court by scholar-officials and Prime Minister Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), who advocated a conservative military defensive policy rather than an aggressive posture.²⁴ Additionally, on the opposite end of the social spectrum, the hereditary system that recruited soldiers from every household was often resisted by the common people, who longed to maintain a sedentary lifestyle and aimed to ascend in society by means of craftsmanship, agriculture, commerce, and, most importantly, officialdom through success in empire-wide civil examinations.

That the empire no longer assumed a tribute system and the fact that the oceans were full of pirates and illegal transactions worried many literati. It is then not a coincidence that sixteenth-century society also witnessed literati such as Yan Congjian 嚴從簡, Luo Yuejiong 羅曰褰, Huang Zhong 黃衷, who published diplomatic historical-cum-geographical accounts of foreign countries to explore the various strategies deployed against and experiences encountered with barbarians, throughout China's history. In the preface of *Shuyu zhousi lu* 殊域周恣錄 by the scholar official Yan Congjian, who once served as an emissary candidate at the Bureau of Envoys (xingren si 行人司) subject to the Department of Rites (libu 禮部), we see the author's yearning for self-fulfillment not attained in his career. He deems it ideal to take ambassadorship to actualize men's aim for great accomplishments in the world, however, his confession that he is living reclusively in a back alley (piju louxiang 僻居陋巷) and that he has never been dispatched to a foreign country seems to hint at how the seclusion of the late Ming Empire put a damper

²⁴ Ray Huang, 1587, *A Year of No Significance: the Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

on his career aspirations. Yan Congjian's compulsion of fettering his scholarly talents to write diplomatic history evinces his anxiety over the late Ming Empire.

The flourishing of historical-cum-geographical accounts coincided with the publication of morality books by the left wing of the Wang Yangming school, considered by the orthodox scholarly community as heretical. These books promoted the idea of achieving mundane profits through "self-determination" and the accumulation of good karma by working on the ledgers of merit and demerit.²⁵ Their ardent and humanistic speeches functioned as an emotional catharsis for audiences of farmers, merchants, students, and petite scholar-officials, who either aspired for social ascendance or were frustrated at their social downgrading because of political and economic turmoil.²⁶

On the other hand, one cannot go without mentioning those of the late Ming who did not really care about the empire or the state. These people had no interest in the political other than the ways that it concerned their everyday life, their official career, and scholarly examinations. The literatus Zhang Dai 张岱 (1597-1689) once compiled a reference book of common knowledge for literati who only sought to memorize the names found in Confucian classics because their lack of knowledge caused them to make insensible mistakes in leisure conversations. In a short section titled *waiyi* 外譯, literally, foreign translations, he collected forty-two Chinese transcriptions of foreign country names and for each name summarized the country's tribute and combat history with China. Although the Chinese language is considered here as a vehicle of imperial

ideology and that the conventional idea of translating foreign languages is part and parcel

²⁵ Wm. Theodore de Bary. *Self and Society in the Ming Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985). Also see Cynthia Brokaw *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in late Imperial China* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²⁶ Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008).

of the act of establishing tribute relations with foreigners, reinforcing the Sino-centric order, this knowledge was only used for the literati to dispel time during their everyday leisure activities.

Expanding the Studies of Romance: a Chinese Tradition

By looking at Chinese full-length vernacular fiction as romances rather than novels, this dissertation also hopes to expand Western studies of medieval and early modern romances by integrating a discussion of non-Western romances. The very notion that China does not have this epic-romance-novel sequence of literary history--especially the idea that China does not have epics and that the epic and the romance are in ways overlapping genres--reiterates a different tradition of non-Western literature. This notion then seems to allow both non-Chinese and Chinese literary critics to dismiss any attempt to discuss the Chinese genre of romance in comparison to its Western counterpart. Moreover, previous scholarship on Chinese literature in North America has emphasized the fact that Chinese narratives do not have enough formal features to be conceived of as distinct genres and that Chinese narratives tend to be “episodic.”²⁷

The difficulty of discussing Chinese romances in a much broader context in English-speaking academia in North America is perhaps due to a much narrowly defined conception of romance, especially when such an English word is applied to Chinese literature. The Oxford English Dictionary offers the following definitions of romance:

A. I. As a literary genre, and derived senses.

1. A medieval narrative (originally in verse, later also in prose) relating the legendary or extraordinary adventures of some hero of chivalry. Also in extended use,

²⁷ See Andrew Plaks, *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton university Press, 1977) 312-352.

with reference to narratives about important religious figures.

2. a. A Spanish historical ballad or short epic poem, typically composed in octosyllabic lines.

3. a. A fictitious narrative, usually in prose, in which the settings or the events depicted are remote from everyday life, or in which sensational or exciting events or adventures form the central theme; a book, etc., containing such a narrative.

7. A story of romantic love, esp. one which deals with love in a sentimental or idealized way; a book, film, etc., with a narrative or story of this kind. Also as mass noun: literature of this kind.²⁸

When applied to Chinese literature, “romance” usually designates for its audience, both experts and common readers, as love stories and legendary history, as in *Romance of Three Kingdoms*, losing its meaning as a genre. Even for the Tang *chuanqi* tales, which largely feature love stories, as Wilt Idema indicates, do not form distinct generic conventions that demarcate them from the majority of *zhiguai* 志怪 (strange writing) genre.²⁹

Moreover, aware of Chinese fiction’s intricate relationship with historiography and the tradition’s emphasis on vernacularity and the depiction of the fantastic to differentiate the fiction from other discursive narratives and lyrical forms, scholars tend to use non-Western generic classifications in their discussions of Chinese fiction. What is concealed, however, is the commonality between Chinese and Western genres. For instance, Andrew Plaks translates the term *yanyi* 演義 as “fictionalized history” (319); Judith Zeitlin translates *yanyi* as “vernacular exposition,”³⁰ while the *Indian Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* translates the same term literally as “revelation of meaning,” but defines it as “vernacular romance.”³¹

²⁸ "romance, n. and adj.1". OED Online. June 2013. Oxford University Press. 29 July, 2013.

²⁹ Wilt L. Idema, “Chinese Literature: Medieval narrative,” 27.

³⁰ Judith Zeitlin, “Xiaoshuo,” Moretti, 255.

³¹ William H. Nienhauser, Jr., Y.W. Ma, Stephen H. West eds., *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press 1986-1998) 425.

Other examples are the generic titles *zhuan* 傳 as in *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (*the Water Margin*), *zhi* 志 as in the *zhiguai* 志怪 (writing of the strange) genre such as *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, and *ji* 記 as in *Xiyou ji* 西遊記. These titles are all connected to historiography, as they all somewhat mean the faithful record of events. *Zhuan* means biography; *zhi* means inscription; *ji* means record. Even though these labels suggest connections to historiography, they hinge more upon jotting down the strange, the marvelous, and the peculiar with reference to a certain ideology. These titles do not project generic categories of Chinese fiction. The major generic title these fictional works have is the rather general term of *xiaoshuo* 小說, which has been in use since the Tang dynasty. In the sixteenth century, when Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) attempted to establish a history for vernacular fiction and integrate the genre into the larger field of *xiaoshuo*, he mainly termed those vernacular fiction categories as *tongsu yanyi* 通俗演義, which are full-length vernacular fiction. By the 1660s, full-length vernacular fiction became increasingly related to the name *xiaoshuo* (Zeitlin 256). Additionally, it has almost been presumed that full-length vernacular fiction is equivalent to the “novel” in the field of late imperial Chinese literature. “Novel” is a convenient word to designate the seemingly untranslatable term *xiaoshuo*.

Perhaps it is Hsia Tsi'an who first proposed that a study of the genre of romance is necessary. He lists several sub-categories of Chinese romance:

- (1) Scholar-meets-beauty [ts'ai-tzu chia-jen 才子佳人]. This type probably had its origins in the T'ang period. I have not come across any stories similar to "The Story of Ying-ying" ["Ying-ying chuan"] published before the T'ang.
- (2) Martial-knighthood [*wu-hsia* 武俠].
- (3) Fairy tales and myths.

- (4) Historical sagas, including cycles such as *Generals of the Yang Family* [Yang-chia chiang 楊家將], *Generals of the Hsueh Family* [Hsueh-chia chiang 薛家將], etc.
- (5) Crime-case stories [kung-an 公案].³²

I agree with Hsia on these categories, except that I would expand the category of fairy tales and myths by adding *JW* and the sub-genre of *shenmo xiaoshuo* initiated by *JW*. In *shenmo xiaoshuo*, elements of romance such as magical combat, accidental occurrences in the plot, and a final reconciliation between good and evil, are all present. I also would add *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*) and *the Water Margin* to the category of historical sagas because the former is based upon the history of the Three Kingdoms 三國 (220-280), and the latter is based on the war between the Jurchen Jin and the Southern Song. I would further add *Jin Ping Mei* and other erotic fiction of the late Ming as a subcategory of the rubric of “scholar-meets-beauty.” Over all, I do not limit Chinese romance as a type of popular and less elite fiction as suggested by Hsia, rather I consider some of the most important Chinese masterpieces as masterpieces of romance as well.

There has not been a systematic study of all these works as Chinese romances. Tina Lu’s recent book promoted a study of family romances by incorporating postcolonial studies in her analysis of how familial relationships construct notions of community and empire.³³ However, those stories are largely vernacular stories, *chuanqi* plays, and full-length family romances. My dissertation, rather, focuses on “historical romances”—full-length fiction that romanticizes historical generals and religious

figures-- to look at how various empires are imagined in the genre. Not only was this type

³² T. A. Hsia and Dennis T. Hu, “Novel and Romance: Hsia Tsi-an on Chinese Popular Literature,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Jul., 1980) 224-236.

³³ Tina Lu, *Accidental Incest, Filial Cannibalism, and Other Peculiar Encounters in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass: Published by the Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008).

of fiction the most dominant and popular genre in late imperial China, but reviewing history was often times the most important way for late imperial Chinese to reflect upon their contemporary period. It is because in Chinese fiction and historiography events can be universalized, commemorated, and internalized to convey political and moral implications to the reader. Andrew Plaks has noted that Chinese narrative art achieves a seemingly aesthetic unity through spatial patterning and figurative recurrence, the underpinnings of which are the entire literary civilization including the yin-yang formulations, the cycle of unity and disintegration, and so forth. Despite or perhaps even because of these underpinnings, Chinese fiction in general features a lack of coherence in terms of time (335). David Der-wei Wang also notes that “Paradoxically enough, the passage of time is usually not the most conspicuous factor in classical Chinese historical writings; rather it is the attempt to ‘spatialize’ or commemorate morally or politically remarkable events and figures that becomes the central concern.”³⁴ In light of this scholarship, I define the fictional works in my dissertation as “historical romances.”

In their seminal critical works, Northrop Frye and V. Propp both have theorized western quest-romance as the most important genre. Frye thinks of Western quest-romance as the most wish-fulfilling of genres: it is “child-like,” persistent, and nostalgic for a golden age. He defines its plot as essentially an adventure of the hero to realize his selfhood by rescuing a maiden trapped in the wilds. Since quest-romance resembles rituals and dreams, Nature in the genre manifests itself as either the theological body or the maternal body.³⁵ On the other hand, Propp’s structural analysis of Russian folk tales

³⁴ See his article “Fictional History/Historical Fiction,” *Studies in Language and Literature* 1 (1985) 69.

³⁵ See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 1957) 186-206.

refuses to divide fairy tales into categories according to their themes: rather he concentrates on the functions of the characters in the plot. He also remarks that Russian folktales were a psychological development made in response to the religious control of the state receding.³⁶

In his analysis of French medieval romance-- the origin of English medieval romance and the Western novel, Alberto Varvaro points out that the “otherness” of alternative time, space, and society, such as that of the Arthurian world as opposed to the French or Anglo-Norman courts of the 12th century is the “guarantee of literary legitimacy.”³⁷ He further notes that this alternative society is not just “analogous to contemporary society” (169), but creates an antithetical space of courtly morality driven by adultery where triumphant historical figures such as Jean of Burgundy and the Count of Nevers nevertheless live a disastrous life in romance. The medieval romance’s opposition to reality overlaps with the political function of some fictionalized historiography: Pedro López de Ayala conceals the failure of historical battles and narrates the victory of Edward and du Guesclin according to chivalric models established by the romantic genre (180). The East within romance is, however, always a “complimentary” periphery to the center of the court. Furthermore, Piero Boitani discusses how *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* possesses the infinite momentum of expansion and evolvment due to its elasticity and adaptability across Europe and over time. Chaucer developed the romantic genre in his *The Knight’s Tale* and in *Troilus*; in France, the story became Lancelot-Grail Vulgate, in the fertile cross-generic grounds of

³⁶ V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

³⁷ Alberto Varvaro, trans. Jeremy Parzen, “Medieval French Romance,” Franco Moretti ed., *The Novel: History, Geography and Culture* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2006) 156-180.

Italy, Boccaccio renovated the romance in *Filocolo* and *Decameron*, among others, and back in Northern England *Morte Arthure* and *Mort d'Arthur* emerged.³⁸

It is this persistence and the perennial vitality of the romance that makes Fredric Jameson advocate genre criticism so as to diagnose the dynamics between society and literary genres. Thus Jameson calls upon a radical historicization of Northrop Frye's approach to romance that hinges upon the ethical axis of good and evil--the immanent "essence" of romance. This binary of good and evil that is assimilated into Nature by Frye, in effect, "coincides with" the self-other binary in which the various Others ranging from barbarian, woman, Jew, to Communist, are feared precisely because they are the Other. By stating the necessity of historicizing texts, Jameson suggests that texts like *chanson de geste* functioned as an "imaginary 'solution'" to the conflict between the feudal nobility and "the older social class"--a symbolic answer to think about the enemy as evil as absolutely different from what "I" understand "myself" as an entity. In this sense, the reason that romance emerged when authority disappeared is because romance functioned as a healing and self-assuring means for "I" to seek a certain stability in the chaotic reality. Jameson, however, points out that romance's final reconciliation between the evil and the good by finally categorizing the Other into "us," will further recompose the "seme of evil" into "a free-floating and disembodied element, a baleful optical illusion, in its own right" (119). That is, Jameson treats the magical elements in romance, indeed, its entire chronotope or generic institution, as already containing that very ideologeme of good and evil. Furthermore, Jameson problematizes the "irreversibility" of storytelling as structurally fixed in Propp's approach. Propp's essentializing of the diachronic aspect of storytelling then risks objectifying the character in the plot as actants

³⁸ "Romance," Moretti, 269-281.

of the mechanism that mediates such concepts as good and evil. In all, Jameson argues that the Western quest-romance emerges in times of anarchy when central authority disappears and populations are forced to withdraw from invading barbarians or mobs. It is this interesting notion that supports the correlation between the social-political world and the genre in my dissertation.

I will now briefly outline the origin of Chinese historical romances. I have mainly analyzed three types of “historical romances:” military romance as represented by *RNS* magic-travel romance represented by *JW*, and a hybrid romance. *RNS*’s generic history is very much similar to other types of historical romances that I will work on after my graduation such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *the Water Margin*. *RNS* evolved from fourteenth-century *pinghua* 平話, the rough and brief narratives that are similar to prompt-books. There are only a handful of the earliest *pinghua* that remain extant: namely, *Datang Sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話, *Sanguo zhi pinghua* 三國志平話, *Wudai shi pinghua* 五代史平話, *Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事, *Xue Rengui zhengliao shilue* 薛仁貴征遼事略.³⁹ Though very little has been written down about the storytelling performance, what is certain is that the magical elements in *JW* such as magical battles, shape-shifting deities, religious quest journeys, and the final conversion of the Other into Buddhism originated in Tang transformation texts (*bianwen* 變文).⁴⁰

Structure of the Dissertation

³⁹ “Some Remarks and Speculations Concerning ‘p’ing-hua,’” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 60, Livr. 1/3 (1974) 121-172.

⁴⁰ See Victor Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph).

Chapter two examines the images of female warrior Mu Guiying, the Dangxiang princess Huang Qiongnu, and Empress Dowager Xiao in *RNS* and *RYF* to discuss how these woman warrior figures are manipulated in the fiction as magical saviors to reconcile the tension between the family and the state. Chapter three traces the genesis of the generic convention of the lore of “Journey to the West” back to the mythological canon *Guideways of Mountains and Seas*, delineating the popular religious and dramatic performances of the lore from the Tang dynasty to the Ming dynasty. Chapter four concentrates on the text of *JW* itself by looking at how verbal jokes on moral corruption, cannibalism, and exogamous marriage are imagined between the narrator and the reader in a shared psychological and sociological community. Chapter five contextualizes *SVW* with a larger historical and linguistic discourse on Zheng He’s voyages in the Indian Ocean, Java, and Javanese in the sixteenth century in order to demonstrate the formation of a kind of imperialism in reference to the maritime peril present at the time. Overall, this dissertation argues that the romances under discussion share cathartic, self-fulfilling, and violent qualities in their appropriation of China’s history of trans-national encounters into jokes, games, and carnage through the use of the tropes of exogamous marriage, cannibalism, magical battles.

CHAPTER TWO

GAMES OF THE CHINESE EMPIRE: FAMILY, FRONTIER, AND MILITARY ROMANCES *ROMANCE OF THE NORTHERN SONG* AND *ROMANCE OF THE YANG FAMILY GENERALS*

Introduction

Chapter two demonstrates that the game-like narrative mode of *RNS* and *RYF*, in the warfare between “us” and “them” has cathartic, fulfilling, and aggressive qualities. I argue that the stories, with their inherent conceptions of the state and community, are already pregnant with “proto-nationalistic sentiments”, from which modern readers like Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 derived spiritual support for their nationalistic sentiments in times of foreign aggression.

In this chapter, I begin by first positing that the literary geography of *RNS* is constructed upon the traditional notion that danger to a state can be manifested by excessive Yin energy, which is at once shown in different locales and in different social groups in the empire--in the capital and on the frontier. Additionally, it is ultimately internal distress that arouses barbarian aggression from outside the empire. Such a notion lays the foundation for Yu Jiaxi’s modern notion of “national unity” and his “sentiment of grievance.” I then go on to demonstrate how the image of female warriors that emerged in *RYF* and *RNS* in the 16th century was a significant subject of these fantastical narratives, which aimed to reconcile the tension between the family and the state, and between filial piety and loyalty. Through tracing the origin of the trope of female warriors back to the 14th century and by connecting it to its later development in the 18th century,

I analyze how female warriors—non-domestic women and foreign princesses-- became a fused category. This is a category that is the opposite of domestic women, a grouping that is marked by their exogamous desire to marry either the social elite or Chinese generals. This exogamous desire then helps to create social mobility on the one hand, and cement the unification of a heterogeneous community on the other. Third, I show how this exogamous desire has the ability to promote the contempt, defeat, and disgrace of the hyper-masculine enemy Tartars because it sexualizes and demoralizes their women. Finally, I discuss how the maternal and childlike images of “us” that the works are centered around are the crux of the cultural politics of the fantastical narratives in *RNS* and *RYF*, tapping into the powerful Confucian tradition of filial piety and loyalty to achieve catharsis and community unification. These maternal and childlike images are precursors to the modern notion of “motherland”.

Literary Geography and the Predicament of Travel in Military

Romance

The saga of the Yang Family Generals (Yang jia jiang 楊家將) -- the oral and literary family drama of *pinghua* 平話,⁴¹ plays, and vernacular fiction, of which *Romance of the Northern Song* (*Bei Song zhizhuan* 北宋志傳) (henceforth *RNS*) is the most

⁴¹ *Pinghua* is a fourteenth-century genre of all-prose narratives centered on historical themes. Idema speculates that a precursor of the vernacular fiction of the Saga of the Yang Family Generals is “*pinghua*-like texts.” For a preliminary survey of the history of *pinghua*, see Idema’s “Some Remarks and Speculations concerning ‘p’ing-hua” in *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 60, Livr. 1/3 (1974) 121-172.

authoritative member⁴²--tells of how the loyal marshal Yang Ye 楊業 (d.986) along with his sons and grandsons fights an ongoing series of campaigns to defeat the hostile states of the Khitan Liao 遼 (916-1125) and Tangut Western Xia 夏 in order for the Northern Song 宋 (960-1127) to restore an unified Chinese empire. Their unconditional loyalty to the Chinese emperors sets them on a journey to perilous locales; however the darkest realm is the malicious mind. Wherever they go, they are overshadowed by gloom from two domains, tricky barbarians on the northern frontier in the region of Youzhou 幽州 and traitors in the bureaucracy at the Song capital of Kaifeng 開封. Their virtues of allegiance and eminence put the Yang family in jeopardy.

One wicked minister encourages the emperor to make unwise choices, later appointing the Yang family generals to rescue him from subsequent catastrophes. Yang Ye loses four of his seven sons in escorting the emperor out of Khitan territory north to Mount Wutai 五台山. His fifth son escapes death by becoming a monk at Mount Wutai. The minister also coerces Yang Ye and his two sons to fight an impossible battle in the Chenjia Valley 陳家谷 northwest of Shanxi 山西 province against an overwhelming number of enemy troops. Captured, Yang Ye commits suicide by bashing his head on the stele of Han general Li Ling 李陵, and his seventh son, tied to a pole, becomes the

⁴² There are two extant works of vernacular fiction on the legend of the generals of the Yang family. One is *Beisong zhizhuan* 北宋志傳, whose earliest surviving edition is the Santaiguan 三台館 edition which predates the Shidetang 世德堂 edition and the Ye Kunchi 葉昆池 edition printed in 1594. The other one is *Yangjiafu shidai zhongyong yanyi zhizhuan* 楊家府世代忠勇演義志傳. Even though its earliest extant edition dates to 1606, Sun Kaidi 孫楷弟 and Wilt Idema have identified it as a slightly revised version of an earlier text from the early sixteenth century. *Beisong zhizhuan* was much more popular and thus more influential in forming the discourse of the Yang Family Generals from the late Ming to the mid-Qing to today. The edition I use for this paper is Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 ed., *Nan Bei Song zhizhuan* 南北宋志傳, *Guben Xiaoshuo jicheng* 古本小說集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990) 203-204.

shooting target of the Khitans.⁴³ Another sinister minister, an undercover agent for the Liao, then induces the emperor to sentence Yang Yanzhao 楊延昭, the only remaining son of the Yang family, to death. This is because his servant has angrily murdered the minister's son-in-law's entire family to avenge his vicious act of tearing down the loft of the Yang residence at Kaifeng, which had been a gift from the emperor.

In the first part of the saga and in *Romance of the Yang Family* (Yangjiafu shidai zhongyong yanyi zhizhuan 楊家府世代忠勇演義志傳)⁴⁴ (henceforth *RYF*)--an early 16th century fiction upon which *RNS* is based, Yang Ye and his seven sons all perish one by one. In the second part of the saga, supernatural elements and female warriors emerge. Yang Yanzhao is saved from the death penalty and with his son Yang Zongbao 楊宗保 regains imperial favor. His fifteenth-year-old helps him with a phenomenal achievement by leading their armies to break the pernicious Heavenly Gate Battle Array (tianmen zhen 天門陣) directed by Empress Dowager Xiao 蕭太后 at the Nine Dragon Valley (jiulong gu 九龍谷) with the assistance of his chivalrous wife Mu Guiying 穆桂英, who he has met on the road. However, since the frontiers of the Khitan and Western Xia on the southwest and northwest borders of China are always faraway from the imperial capital where the Yang Family is located, and because of the fact that danger and enemies can materialize at anytime in both the capital and on the frontiers, the crisis of individual and familial survival at the frontier is sustained to the end of the saga.

⁴³ The late thirteenth century literatus Xu Dazhuo 徐大焯 mentioned how Yang Ye and his son sacrificed their lives to protect the emperor in his *Jinyu lu* 烬餘錄. The stories of Yang Ye and his fifth son were adapted into two plays in the Southern Song 宋 (1127-1279): "Great Lord Yang" (Yang Linggong 楊令公) listed by Luo Ye 羅燁 in the Yuan 元 dynasty as a play on sword fighting and "Yang Number Five Becoming a Monk" (Wulang weiseng 五郎為僧) as a play on stick fighters. A Ming *zaju* 雜劇 play based upon *RNS*, "Saving Loyalty with Opening an Edict" (Kaizhao jiuzhong 開昭救忠) also portrays the battle.

⁴⁴ The edition I use is *Juan Quanxiang yangjiafu shidai zhongyong tongsu yanyi zhizhuan* 鐫全相楊家府世代忠勇通俗演義志傳 edited by Qinhuai Moke 秦淮墨客 and proofread by Yanbo Diaosou 煙波釣叟 from *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* 古本小說集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990) v.625-626.

More importantly, the textual community of the saga of the Yang family, manifested in a the a broad collection of *pinghua*, plays, oral stories, and vernacular fiction became and remained popular across the spectrum of society, from villages to the court, from the late 13th century to the 19th century and beyond.⁴⁵ Beyond folk and oral stories, *RNS* also incorporated the Yuan zaju plays *Theft of Bones* (Meng Liang dao guzhi 孟良盜骨植), *Yang Number Six Secretively Leaving the Three Passes* (Yang Liulang sixia sanguan 楊六郎私下三關),⁴⁶ and *Xie Jinwu Accidentally Tearing Down the Mansion of Pure Wind* (Xie Jinwu zhachai qingfeng fu 謝金吾詐拆清風府). The early 17th-century zaju plays, namely *Catching Xiao Tianyou Alive* (Huona Xiao Tianyou 活拿蕭天佑), *Saving the Loyal by Opening an Edict* (Kaizhao jiuzhong 開昭救忠), and *Defeating the Heavenly Battle Array* (Po tianzhen 破天陣), all of which include triumphant endings, use *RNS* as a source. Its influence even stretched into the Qing. Not only are there at least six Qing 清 (1644-1912) plays based upon *RNS*,⁴⁷ but at the court in 1813 Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧 (1835-1908) also adapted *RNS* into the court play *Glorious Music of a Brilliant Age* (*Zhaodai xiaoshao* 昭代簫韶). This drama of 240 scenes required 10 days for a complete performance. Overall, the model of loyalty, self-sacrificing patriotism, and

⁴⁵ Loyal subjects and filial piety are the main themes favored by local village elites, owing to their conservative and conventional tastes. For a list of popular local drama in the Ming-Qing period, including the Saga of Yang Family Generals, see, Tanaka Issei's "The Social and Historical Contexts of Ming-Ch'ing Local Drama" in *Popular Culture in late Imperial China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

⁴⁶ It was adapted from *The Skit of Administering a Beating to Military Affairs Commissioner Wang* (Da Wang Shumi cuan 打王樞密爨) in the Jin 金 dynasty (1115-1234).

⁴⁷ The Qing plays include but are not limited to *Li Ling Stele* (Li Ling bei 李陵碑), *Hu Yanzan reporting his merits* (Hu Yanzan biaogong 呼延贊表功), *General of Divine Fire* (Shenhuo jiangjun 神火將軍), *Meng Liang Stealing Horses* (Meng Liang dao ma 孟良盜馬), *Mountain Camp of Mu* (Mu Kezhai 穆柯寨), *Hong Yang Cave* (Hong yang dong 洪羊洞). The Qing plays that were based upon *Beisong zhizhuan* are: *Silang tanmu* 四郎探母, *Qing guan ce* 清官冊, *Wulang chujia* 五郎出家, *Jin Shatan* 金沙灘, *Kouzhun beixue* 寇準背靴. See the "introduction" to *Yang jia fu yanyi* 楊家府演義 (Beijing: Baowentang shudian, 1980) 5.

triumphalism was valued in the Qing court and popularly received by both the people and the states of Republican China and the People's Republic of China.⁴⁸

Mu Guiying's miraculous invincibility, which enables her to penetrate all kinds of battle arrays to save her husband and his family, seems to conceal the prevailing problems of the Yang family generals' survival throughout the saga. C. T. Hsia points out that the military romance's "preoccupation with warfare" "is at once the principal characteristic of the military romance and the main cause for its failure to reach the status of serious fiction." This is because it neglects "ordinary human concerns and passions."⁴⁹ The ceaseless sequence of warfare belies a fundamental concern for humanity in times of war. However, what is most interesting about this narrative is less the warfare *per se* than the narration of combat as an enjoyable game--a game that like the military romance itself has its mechanical, cathartic, fulfilling, and violent qualities. That is to say, the seemingly interminable campaigns in *RNS* in which female warriors, military strategies, and magical battle formations are emphasized are especially developed to serve the cultural politics of the 16th-century military romance. That is: *RNS* guides the reader to imagine various scenarios of crises, providing paradigmatic solutions to such crises, which necessarily involve heterogeneous community unification through the sentiments of filial piety and loyalty that are based upon heterosexual and exogamous marriage.

Furthermore, I suggest that the narrative sentiments of military romance itself are not unlike the impulses of the "medieval nationalism of conquest", as defined by Etienne Balibar. He proposes to differentiate between the "nationalism of conquest" and the

⁴⁸ Idema's "Introduction" to *Saga of Yang Family Generals*, unpublished manuscript, 2-3.

⁴⁹ C. T. Hsia, "The Military Romance: A Genre of Chinese Fiction" in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 339.

“nationalism of liberation,” and between the “nationalism of the dominant” and “that of the dominated.”⁵⁰ However in *RNS*, there seems to be a mix of the nationalism of conquest and that of liberation. On the one hand the Northern Song is under severe attack by bellicose invading Tartars, however on the other hand the rhetoric of the military romance assumes China’s cultural and military domination over its border enemies. In this narrative, wars on the border zones will eventually result in China’s triumph, manifesting an aggressive representation of Confucian universalism-- “all under Heaven,” *tianxia* 天下.

Yet the term “universalism” is also not precise enough to define the perspective of *RNS*. Pamela Crossley has noted that “world” rather than “universe” is a more precise translation of *tianxia*. Whereas early modern emperors are like universes that are infinitely heterogeneous, worlds, rather, are finite, local, and consistent.⁵¹ For Crossley, Confucian universalism is but one aspect of the Qing emperor’s vision of ruling the world; however, the notion of *tianxia* does show a view of a boundless heterogeneous empire. Although Crossley only discusses Qing emperors through the prism of history, the same notion about the ambivalent characteristics of *tianxia* can be applied to Ming fiction. A Ming fiction like *RNS* manifests a notion of the finite world in the sense that it has a limited space of imagination and that it shows only one of the many worlds of the late Ming Empire. *RNS* is local in the sense that it is written and published by Xiong Damu in the Fujian region. *RNS* is consistent in the sense there is a coherent plot, nonetheless, it also carries heterogeneous characteristics because it draws upon a large

⁵⁰ Étienne Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism,” *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1992) 45.

⁵¹ Pamela Crossley, *The Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 37-38.

spectrum of fictional and historical materials to compose its story, ranging from various zaju drama to fictional battles and a chronological framework derived from the official history *Tongjian gangmu* 通鑑綱目 and its sequels.

This is all to say that *RNS*, as well as other examples of the sub-genre of military romance in late imperial China, constitute a universe-like world that consistently depicts warfare with barbarians and other enemies. These military romances include *RYF* and *RNS*, as well as *the Complete Romance of Yue Fei* (Shuo Yue quan zhuan 說岳全傳), which recounts the general Yue Fei 岳飛's (1103-1142) campaigns against the Jurchens, *Xue Dingshan Conquering the West* (Xue Dingshan zheng xi 薛丁山征西), which narrates the fictional general Xue Dingshan's conquest of the Xiliang hami kingdom 西涼 哈密國, *Xue Rengui Conquering the East* (Xue Rengui zheng dong 薛仁貴征東) which recounts the Tang emperors' expedition against Liao Dong and Korea, and *Wan Hua Lou* 萬花樓 and *Pingxi* 平西, which are centered around the legendary general Di Qing's 狄青 (1008-1057) conquests of the South, Guangnan 廣南. These fictional works show an empire in the world of cross-border campaigns in which the act of defeating aggressive enemies in times of national defense through the defense and conquest of territory is at once a process of assimilation as well as a process of reinforcing the boundary between "us" and "them." This is to achieve communal unity and, consequently, victory.

Different versions of a fiction can construct different fictional worlds. The total ignorance of northern geography in *RYF*, written in the early sixteenth century, has encouraged Wilt Idema to speculate that it was written in the south, presumably in the Jiangnan 江南 area, and that the intense resentment at the corrupted emperors in *RYF* has alienated the generals of the Yang family from the centripetal force of the court.⁵²

⁵² Idema, "Something rotten in the state of Song," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, Volume 36, 2006. 57-75.

Conversely, *RNS*, written near the end of the sixteenth century by the prolific literatus-publisher Xiong Damu 熊大木 (ca. 1506-1579) in the urban publishing center of Jianyang 建陽 of the remote southeastern province Fujian 福建, details northern battlegrounds and border zones, conceiving of an integrated empire. Particularly, Mount Wutai and Youzhou are given a portrayal through the eyes of Emperor Taizong 太宗 on his trip crossing the border between the Song and the Khitan states.

果見一座好山：前控幽州，後接太原，端然限界……太宗看之不足，因指前一望之地問曰：“野草連天，卻是何處？”潘仁美奏曰：“此幽州也，古來建都之地，最是好光景。” (*RNS* 622)

He indeed saw a marvelous mountain, dominating Youzhou at front and connecting Taiyuan behind. A salient borderline. ... Taizong could not stop enjoying the scenery, thus pointed at a place afar and asked, “the place where wild grass bridges the sky, what is it?” Pan Renmei reported, “It is Youzhou. A place to establish the imperial capital since ancient times. It has the best view.”

A sense of curiosity and pleasure at traveling and appreciating natural scenery is mixed with an admiration for the political center. Such sentiments were present both inside and outside the fiction. Unlike the Northern and Southern Songs, who lost Youzhou and Mount Wutai, the Ming dynasty recovered them. Thus, in the sixteenth century the locales are not places of frustration, but of happy enchantment. For the Ming Empire, its territorial bounds as a state were unprecedented since the Tang dynasty, stretching from the Great Wall southward some 1,200 miles to South China Sea. Consequently there was no problem for a narrator living in the far south to envisage and acknowledge the northern capital and its geographical borders as the center of politics and warfare. On the other hand, news, intelligence, or *xiaoxi* 消息 spreads between the Chinese and the Khitans so fast that adverbs such as “already” (*yi* 已), “immediately” (*ji* 即), “overnight” (*louye* 漏夜), “unexpectedly” (*buxiang* 不想) are ubiquitous and

commonplace words in the work. A sense of simultaneity is *a priori* the precondition of an interconnected world.

The contemporaneousness of the literary geography of *RNS* indicates a connected world, and a view of a seemingly boundless empire. This corresponds to the geopolitics of Youzhou, which suggest to the reader the dual sentiments of a “nationalism of liberation” and a “nationalism of conquest.” First, Youzhou is represented in *RNS* as a place of military importance. Thus it is one of the many such territorial pivot points of *RNS*. Youzhou is the most dramatic of these locales, where the tensions between the heroes and the traitors and barbarians explode. It is here that Yang Number Seven risks his life to protect the emperor in his failed campaign in 979 and where Yang Ye loses his five sons. The tragedy of Youzhou corresponds roughly to the last ten years of 986-997, during which Taizong fails in his attempts to recover the sixteen prefectures (Yanyu shiliu zhou 燕雲十六州). Song emperors and literati greatly lamented the loss of the sixteen prefectures in Hebei, Shanxi, and Shannxi provinces, which had been conquered by the Khitan Liao. It was commonly held that the imperial map of the Northern Song would remain eternally incomplete without the recovery of the region of Youzhou, located in the area of modern day Beijing. This historical trauma was still remembered in the 16th century. Liu Tong’s 劉侗 (1593-1636) *Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略 (A Brief Record of the Scenery at the Capital of Beijing) is a Ming travelogue on the scenery of the Ming capital of Beijing for real and armchair travelers curious about the Ming capital--the region of Youzhou as the southern capital of the Khitan Liao in the Northern Song period. Despite the emphasis on travel, in *Dijing jingwu lue* the political significance of the capital is everywhere. Taking over Beijing and maintaining its natural, political, and

religious landscape was crucial for the Ming emperors, who aimed to heal the imperial trauma caused by the loss of the capital between the Northern Song and Yuan dynasties. Liu Tong quotes the Taizu emperor, for instance, “[He] laughed: You lost the *tianxia*, and yet you lost what your northern dessert originally did not possess; I took *tianxia*, and I took what our central plain originally had. What regret do we have?” (笑曰：爾失天下，失爾漠北所本無，我取天下，取我中原所本有，復何憾). What is evinced is the mixed feelings about gaining what has been lost and “our” confidence in gaining back what we “originally had.” The trauma of historic defeat has to be healed through conquest in the name of defense and territorial retrieval. The sense of the geographical unity of northern China lays the foundation for this political sentiment.

Secondly, what is evinced in the following passage in *RNS* is a happy enchantment with natural scenery--“Taizong could not stop enjoying the scenery.”. Such an enjoyment of sightseeing is also imbued with political implications. The 16th century was a time when secular travel was becoming more popular. In *Dijing jingwu lue*, the joy of appreciating autumn’s red leaves, for instance, is simply about personal amusement. “Under the various impacts of the frost, fruits and leaves are poised differently. Their rich and light colors enter into the distant emptiness. A thin rosy haze rises from the remaining branches. In the dim light, how can I reach them? And I love such mountain breezes blowing upon me” (霜受有深淺，果葉亦異姿。濃澹入遙空，薄霞生餘枝。微照何能及，愛此山風吹). This poem implies that the enchanted self cannot appreciate enough the layers of rich colors and shapes that autumn leaves present at dusk. His accumulated aesthetic experience adds even more to his sense of joy, his sense of “love,” and of being alone as well as his appreciation of being able to take in such beautiful scenery at that

transient moment--perhaps he has never been to this area before. Eventually, the poem ends with the “I,” the viewer, who speaks directly about his circumstance, from his own perspective.

Similarly, when southerner Xiong Damu who, perhaps, has never been to Beijing (although it does not matter whether he has been there or not), depicts the appearance of Mt. Wutai and Youzhou coming into view. The pleasure of visualizing scenery is achieved through imagining a fictional space through a reference to history. It is history that constructs the meaning of Youzhou, and the pleasure of sightseeing in this case cannot be demarcated from the pleasure of knowing the historical significance of the place. As one line indicates, “It is Youzhou. A place to establish the imperial capital since ancient times.” There is a fixed and even static notion about Beijing, a notion that identifies it with the dynastic capitals of antiquity that were also located at Youzhou. Geography here does not show mobility, rather it shows stasis, and geography here is identical to human history.

This static geography is further illustrated through the heroes’ travel between the capital at Kaifeng and the frontiers. This literary geography roughly manifests a conventional Confucian morality about the state in danger, projecting a dilemma for the Yang family of generals through their difficult travel. As Figure 2.1 illustrates, any travel beyond the Three Passes would eventually lead to a death of a member of the Yang Family. However, it is precisely Youzhou, the most dangerous of locales, that has the greatest lure for the Song emperors. On the one hand, Kaifeng, as the heart of the

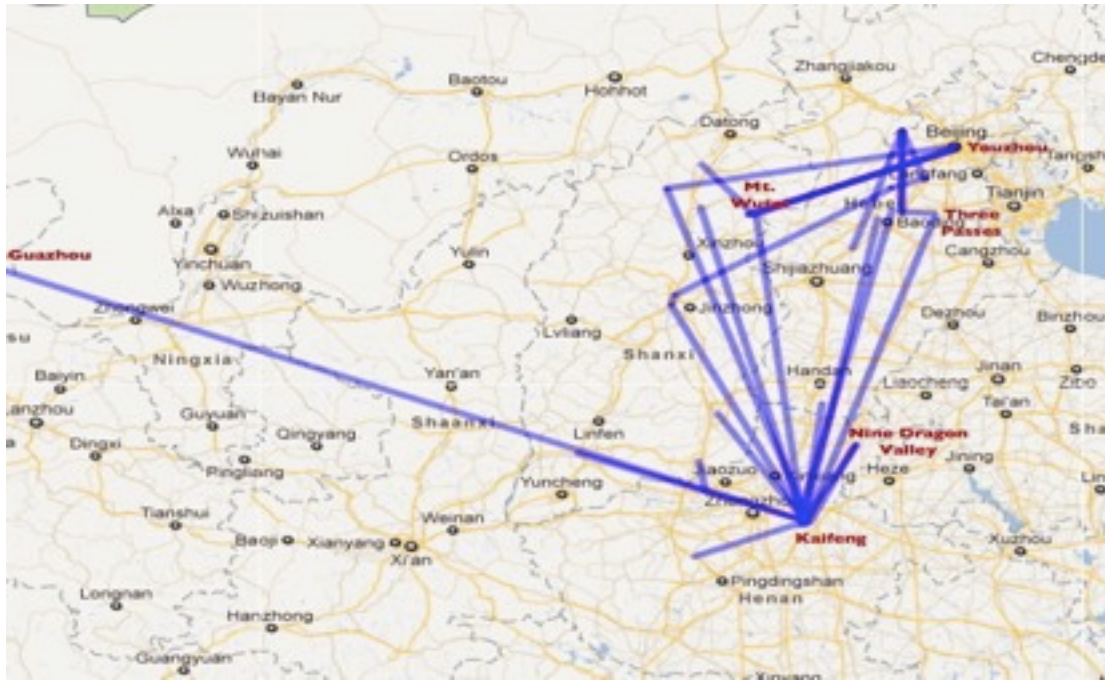


Figure 2.1: literary map of *RMS*, the map used is base dupon google map of China. As the lines show, the troops depart from and return to the capital of Kaifeng for as many as their trips to the borders of the empire. The pivotal places in the fiction are all of military and political importance in history: Mt. Wutai, Youzhou, and the Three Passes. The Nine Dragon valley is a fictional place that symbolizes the battlefield of chanyuan 澶渊 in the historic battle where the Northern Song won but nonetheless signed a convent to comprise with the Khitans.

Northern Song, is the place where the heroes, emperors, and traitors reside. Traitors always want to either drive heroes away from Kaifeng to die at the frontier or to return home from the Three Passes so that they can be penalized for their delinquency. Many of the routes on the map are one-way trips because many soldiers and heroes are simply unable to return. While all the missions that depart from Kaifeng signify loyalty to the emperor, not all the return trips signify loyalty. They also manifest the irresistible centripetal force of home.

According to Northrope Frye, in some western quest-romances, the demi-god hero is from an upper world of brightness, while the demon antagonist hails from a lower world of darkness. These two forces typically engage in a life-and-death struggle in the

human world, a world of the “in-between”, which is marked by the cyclical alternation of spring and winter.⁵³ Like the Biblical and Grecian cosmos that configures the space of the western quest-romance, an important Chinese political philosophy also influences the concentrical space of the military romance. It holds that the natural world and the human world are a harmonious whole. This concentrical human world embodies the natural world, which consists of the mutually interactive and counterbalancing forces of Yin and Yang. The Chinese emperor occupying the center represents Yang energy, which rules the Yin energy of the women, subjects, and barbarians surrounding him. Their spatial distance to him is mutually defined by their relationship to him.⁵⁴ His fundamental way of ruling, the rule that dictates the structure of the military romance, is derived from Mencius. The ruler must show benevolence to his ministers, people, and barbarians, which in turns allows them to form loyal bonds with him. The interaction is likened to a spring breeze which sweeps across young burgeoning grass, flourishing as a response to the warmth of spring.⁵⁵ While heroes are the thriving verdant vegetation, villains are the sterile and wintry land, an extreme and excessive form of Yin attributed to an emperor’s immoral reign. The sterile land is always presented in pairs or triads in two or three

⁵³ Northrope Frye, “The Mythos of Summer: Romance,” *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186-206.

⁵⁴ According to the orthodox Confucian Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE) of the Western Han dynasty, the world of man and the world of nature operate as a harmonious whole: “Therefore when the human world is well governed and the people are at peace, or when the will [of the ruler] is equable and his character is correct, then the transforming influences of Heaven and Earth operate in a state of perfection and among the myriad things only the finest are produced. But when the human world is in disorder and the people become perverse, or when the [ruler’s] will is depraved and his character is rebellious, then the transforming influences of heaven and Earth suffer injury, so that their (yin and yang) ethers generate visitations and harm arises.” For the theory of Yin and Yang and its relationship to Chinese rulership, see the prose essay “Admonitions for the Throne” submitted to Emperor Renzong by Cai Xiang (1012-1067).

⁵⁵ David C. Buxbaum, Frederick W. Mote. *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture*. Hong Kong: Cathay Press Limited, 1972. “The Cosmological Gulf Between China and the West” by Frederick W. Mote and “China as a Race, Culture, and Nation: Notes on Fang Hsiao-ju’s Discussion of Dynastic Legitimacy” by John Fincher.

locales, the periphery and the center. This binary is represented by barbarians at the border, traitors in the imperial court and seductive women in the harem. All barrenness shares the same moral characteristic: trickery, *jian* 姦. Additionally, what lies within the domestic and familiar Confucian circuit has far-flung effects on what lies without.⁵⁶ Barbarian aggression at the frontier is always aroused by traitors in the bureaucracy, and such a situation ultimately stems from unwise rulers who cannot restrain their excessive desires nor differentiate good ministers from bad ones.

When the hero finds himself struggling against foes from two different locales--the periphery and the center--he is placed in a peculiar predicament. As his loyalty is constantly assailed at home, he is forced to continuously risk his life for the sake of the state and himself at the frontier. Eventually a moment of truth passes when the protagonist proves himself a true hero, even if he does not survive the conflict. Afterwards the traitors are punished by gruesome means either in the human world or in an infernal hell. In some western quest-romances, such narratives are propelled by the hero's fulfilling search for the ideal self, an individual who fights against paternal authority to unite with a maiden. This is a motif that is best termed by Freud as the Oedipus complex--a boy's sexual desire for his mother and his unconscious inclination to kill his father. *RNS*, on the other hand, features filial piety and loyalty as the central moral sentiments of the ideal self that needs to be discovered through a hero's torturous journey.⁵⁷ Tina Lu has detailed how in late imperial vernacular fiction imperial geography

⁵⁶ The romance represents the idealistic side of Confucian attitudes towards barbarians, which is unlike the pragmatic view which constantly warned against the dangers of an eventual "barbarian" invasion and urged the strengthening of national defense. Sima Guang 司馬光 for instance, notes that the sage kings always emphasized internal affairs and only when the domestic realm stabilized were remote places to be pacified. See Tao Jing-shen, "Barbarians or Northerners: Northern Sung Images of the Khitans."

⁵⁷ For the psychological connotations of the western quest-romance, see Frye "Theory of Myths: Romance," 194.

can serve as a visionary space for filial sons who journey in search of their father.⁵⁸ It is inherently so because in a Confucian society where the son-father relationship grounds males' public identities as filial sons, patriarchs, and officials, filial piety and loyalty become the prerequisites of humanity. A son has to internalize the superego of his father by obeying what his father wishes and by imitating his behavioral paradigms--especially during the three-year mourning period--through self-adjustment and harmonization.⁵⁹ Consequently, his self-identity must incorporate filiality and loyalty. Thus the hero's life-and-death struggle with traitors and barbarians mitigates his tension with the paternal authority, who is presented to readers as understanding, benevolent, and self-contemplative in recognition of his wrongdoing. Conversely, traitors and barbarians are derivative images of immoral ruling. Through identifying themselves with the ideal of sage kings, heroes act as redeemers of a fallen society. Their suffering is a mirror for rulers and readers alike to learn from the cyclical social corruption and catastrophes that occur in the time and space of the human world.

Female Warriors and Imperial Borders: Marriage, Conquests, and the Empire of Culture in the 16th Century

The fact that female warriors or enamored foreign princesses fight for their Chinese lovers mark the quintessential characteristic of military romances such as *RNS* and *RYF*, indicating new impulses for imagining community in the 16th century. C. T.

⁵⁸ For journeying as a moral trip of filial piety in Chinese vernacular fiction, see Tina Lu's chapter "the Arithmetic of Filial Piety" in *Accidental Incest, Filial Cannibalism, and Other Peculiar Encounters in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, Distributed by Harvard university Press, 2008) 135-156.

⁵⁹ Tu Wei-ming, "Selfhood and otherness: the father-son relationship in Confucian thought," *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

Hsia has noted that these “chieftains’ or foreign kings’ daughters” remind readers that “military romances composed a self-conscious tradition.”⁶⁰ Indeed, later military romances follow the archetype established by Mu Guiying, featuring love affairs between Chinese generals and foreign princesses. The most determined wooer, Fan Lihua 樊梨花, marries Xue Dingshan 薛丁山 in *Xue Dingshan Conquering the West*; the twin sons of Di Qing 狄青 both marry female warriors of their enemy in *Conquering the South*; Di Qing himself falls in love with Princess Saihua 賽花. On the other hand, the women in the political romance *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Sanguo yanyi 三國演義) are wives and femme fatales, while the women in the chivalric romance *the Water Margin* (Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳) are harlots and outlaws. None of them are like the purely heroic, loyal, and martial women found in the military romance.

With the emergence of Mu Guiying, and her mother-in-law, aunts-in-law, and grandmother-in-law in military romance after the saga’s three-hundred-year evolution through oral storytelling and theatrical plays, the structure of the saga of the Yang family generals had reached its full development by the late Ming.⁶¹ However, how would women’s journeys add a new layer of meaning to the literary geography of *RNS*? Why must military romances involve women as invincible warriors on the battlefield-- a stage typically only for men? Females as substitutes for males are not uncommon, but their substitution simultaneously disavows their identity as daughters, wives, and mothers. The female warriors’ preeminent precursor was Hua Mulan 花木蘭, a fictional woman whose appearance dates back to the Northern Wei 魏 in a full-length narrative poem where she

⁶⁰ Hsia, 157-158.

⁶¹ See Cao Jiaqi 曹家齊, “Yang Men nujiang gushi yuanliu chutan” 楊門女將故事源流初探, *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報 (Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue chubanshe, 2008) vol. 6.

impersonates a man to enlist in an army to fulfill her filial duty to her aged father. Her round-trip journey stretches from Henan to Guanshan 关山 in Gansu 甘肃 province.⁶² Although chivalric female knight-errants abound in tales of strange happenings for the representation of social justice, such stories usually take place in the capital. There have never been fictional images of women with clear wife-mother identities fighting vehemently and triumphantly in international campaigns together with their men. How would the female warriors' wifely and motherly bonds change the topography of the imperial map?

Before there was Mu Guiying, another brave woman figuring prominently in Chinese literature and culture around whom thoughts on alliance marriage accumulated, was a Chinese beauty who had to travel to a desolate land to marry the king of the Huns (xiongnu 匈奴). One thousand and six hundred years before, the *History of the Later Han Dynasty* (*Hou Han shu* 後漢書) recorded that a beautiful Chinese court lady named Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, who bitterly resented the fact that she had never had the chance to meet Emperor Yuan 元, volunteered herself to marry Huhan Ye 呼韩邪, a chieftain of the Huns who requested a bride from the emperor as a gesture of peace. The marriage and the two daughters she bore for him pleased him so much that he promised perennial peace in the northwestern region of the Han state between Dunhuang 敦煌 and the Pass. While the official history itself was already instilled with imagination, Wang Zhaojun's self-pity, melancholy, and difficult predicament took hold in Chinese literature and music as the *topos* of "the repentance of Zhaojun" (zhaojun yuan 昭君怨) or "Zhaojun goes beyond the Pass" (zhaojun chusai 昭君出塞).

⁶² Chen Sanping, *Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

On her forlorn condition as a Chinese woman who must sacrifice her honor, culture, and sense of social-belonging, Wang Zhaojun has travelled through two millennia in literature, evincing a variety of sentiments, motivations, and consequences connected to her difficult journey. What is shown is an increasingly hegemonic cultural tendency that diverges from the verisimilitudes of history. Her miscegenetic offspring were totally omitted with the appearance of the vicious court-painter Mao Yanshou 毛延壽 in the early-sixth-century *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語--he begins to appear recurrently in the story. His disfiguration of her portrait which leaves her undiscovered by the emperor becomes stabilized as the cause of her tragic journey, a reason that perpetuates her beauty in the readers' imagination, drawing attention to the palace rather than to foreign land. Additionally, sandy desserts and harsh winds figure as a synecdoche of the barbarian steppe where rests her "green tomb" (qinzhong 青冢) as the metonymy of her adventurous life in Tang poetry. The specific local geography outside the Pass constitutes the places that the beauty travels to--Jiuquan 酒泉, Longle 龍勒, Shibao cheng 石堡城, Yanmen 雁門, and Luntai 輪台--in the Transformation Text (bianwen 變文). These markers of exotic geography eventually recede giving way to a dramatic boundary in the *zaju* romance drama *Hangong qiu* 漢宮秋 by Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 in the late thirteenth century. In this work, the most established narrative version of its time, the beauty never really steps into strange territory, but rather drowns herself in the Black Dragon River (Heilongjiang 黑龍江, Amur River) that marks the geographical and cultural border between the Han and the Huns. Her resentful bitterness also signifies a noble shift to loyalty to her country.⁶³

⁶³ Eugene Eoyang, "The Wang Zhaojun Legend: Configurations of the Classic," *Chinese Literatures, Essays, Articles, and Reviews (CLEAR)*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan., 1982) 3-22.

The diplomatic policy of *heqin* 和親, or peace-alliance intermarriage, after its adoption by Han Gaozu 漢高祖 following the crushing of defeat suffered at Pingcheng in 200 BCE, had not been an unusual way for Chinese dynasties to reach peace accords with their border enemies. *Heqin* through the establishment of familial ties between Chinese imperial families and inner Asian rulers and through the use of women as gifts from one imperial family to another could provide a rhetoric for the normalization of a hierarchical political relationship between China and its rival states.⁶⁴ Despite this utility, the strategy typically has been regarded by the Chinese as a compromising defensive policy for dealing with barbarians. The cultural negativity of interracial marital politics was projected onto late imperial Chinese romance literature. This literature featured a pitiable beauty whose empirical experiences in the world account for nothing-- thus her suicide achieves the same effect as her marriage with the barbarian king for maintaining border peace. Elements excessive to a culture are to be removed: her miscegenational offspring, the barbarian lands, and above all, the possibility of her physical “contamination” by the barbarians upon her crossing the border. The Chinese woman’s farthest journey must stop at the imperial border to protect her from the sort of disgrace deemed unacceptable by her culture. The woman’s body itself marks the imperial border.⁶⁵

Both Wang Zhaojun and Mu Guiying are audacious in launching a culturally impossible but politically significant journey based upon a marriage. Wang Zhaojun and Mu Guiying are sister tropes. One bride sets off for a foreign country to save her home country from an entire war while the other bride heads towards the frontier and beyond to

⁶⁴ Ning Chia’s article on *heqin* in *Presence and Presentation: Women in the Chinese Literati Tradition*. Edited by Sherry J. Mou (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

⁶⁵ For a full exploration of the development of the *topoi* of Wang Zhaojun from the Han dynasty to modern times, see Daphne Lei’s *Operatic China: staging Chinese identity across the Pacific* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

partake in a war with the enemy. Mu Guiying is the opposite image of Wang Zhaojun. Wang Zhaojun is a cultured beauty, a harem favorite, a sentimental being whose singing and zither playing manifest cultural nuances. Mu Guiying is a warrior with a litany of martial qualities: she has been trained for hunting as a skillful archer; and is adept at using her “three flying daggers” (sankou feidao 三口飛刀), such skills which were taught to her by a goddess; and possess “great inborn strength” (shengyou yongli 生有勇力) in *Yangjiafu* and “inborn divine strength” (tiansheng shenli 天生神力) in *RNS*. If a cultured woman cannot traverse the boundary, then an uncultured woman definitely can.

Anthropologists have shown that in China, Tibet, India, Arabia, and ancient Greece, women from families lower on the social hierarchy have more “freedom” in transgressing public and private boundaries. In rural Taiwan, Margery Wolf records that as familial laborers, lower status women worked outside, farmed in the field, washed clothes by the river, and affected their husbands’ behavior and affairs through talking among the women in their community.⁶⁶

The image of Mu Guiying was developed from the trope of the goddess or the robber king’s daughter, who forces herself upon the student traveling to sit for the metropolitan examination, eventually persuading him to marry her. Such stories were derived from the Chinese ballads of the fourteenth century.⁶⁷ The category of goddesses and robber king’s daughters was formed as the opposite of the category of domestic women, who are “unmarked,” to use Roman Jakobson’s term, as a Confucian norm. Thus

⁶⁶ Margery Wolf, *Women and Family in Rural Taiwan*, 38-41.

⁶⁷ For the story of the robber king’s daughter who forces the student who has been defeated by her father to marry her, see for instance the Tale of Zhang Wengui 張文貴, one of the Chenghua cihua 成化詞話. For goddesses who force young men to marry them, see for instance the legend of Chenxiang 沉香. For a goddess who forces a young man to marry her and who shows herself to be a great fighter, see the story of Zhang Sijie. I thank Idema for pointing out the precursors of female warriors in Chinese fictional narratives.

the former category is abnormal, aberrant, and illicit. Both the goddesses and the robber king's daughters seek to form a kinship with the student to create a familial relationship that will not otherwise be available to them either through marriage or by giving birth to sons. The robber king's daughter in the Tale of Zhang Wengui rescues Zhang Wengui from her father, secretively having an affair with him before he sets out for the capital to sit for the metropolitan exam. She hence suffers from her father's accusations until she eventually marries the student in a proper marital ritual. In the main plot of the legend of Chenxiang, whose various versions were circulated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the goddess Sanniang also protects and has an affair with the scholar Liu Xi, who is punished by spirits for showing disrespect to deities. She has a son Chenxiang, and is punished for having an affair with a mortal by being confined under Mount Hua 華山. She is later rescued by her son and retires with her husband and son to her Mount Hua temple. Glen Dudbridge observes that it is sexual desire and human affection that draw the goddess into human relationships, and that human desire is precisely "a longing for maternal bonding."⁶⁸

However, from the perspective of the male subject, these strange empowered women in the estranged world encountered by a coming-of-age hero indicate a kind of "masochism" that configures the other as a *dialectic* authority of both the maternal and paternal powers, to whom the infantile subject submits *strategically*. The capture by male divine spirits signifies the subject's tremendous fear of the outside world, which can simultaneously arouses sympathy from an idealized maternal power. By transferring erotic desire to the strange woman who is passionately in love with the "victim," the male

⁶⁸ Glen Dudbridge's analysis of the Cantonese ballad of Chenxiang in *Books, Tales, and Vernacular Culture* (Brill: Leiden, Boston, 2005).

subject makes his own “victimization” the justification for his possession of idealized maternal power, and by implication, of profiting from the possession of divine power. This heterosexual fantasy about a goddess or a bandit woman always implies a power struggle between the man and the woman’s ruler. In the tale of Chenxiang, it is the Holy Mother’s brother Erlang 二郎 who detests her sister for forming a sexual relationship with a mortal. In the tale of Zhang Wengui, it is her father who prohibits his daughter from participating in an illegitimate affair.

Following the trope of goddesses and robber kings’ daughters falling in love with a student, during Mu Guiying’s duel with Yang Zongbao, she transports him back to her mountain camp, where he then becomes the object of her ardent desire--he is “youthful, handsome, and eloquent” (qingnian xiuli yanci kangkai 青年秀麗言詞慷慨). She consequently proposes that he marry her in exchange for the magical weapon “conquering dragon wood” (xianglongmu 降龍木), which can assist his father in breaking Heavenly battle arrays. He agrees to her proposal. In the western narratives of conquest, the maiden awaits salvation from a chivalric knight, symbolizing a political desire for taking over virgin territory, a desire imagined itself in the cultural tradition of knighthood. In Chinese ballads about a coming-of-age young man’s adventure into the wilderness, usually during his trip to the capital to take the cosmopolitan exam, the protagonist having an empowered woman fall in love with him also indicates a political desire for profits when a subject enters the world in order to succeed. The magical objects of these stories embody the magical power that comes from a union with a woman. In the *Tale of Zhang Wengui*, after his union with the bandit daughter, he is bestowed with three precious objects. One is a belt of black silk and blue jade which can make a dead and sick

man revive if tied to his waist; two is a wine jug that will be full of wine if one taps on it; three is a drinking cup wherein music resounds. These magic objects, like the cornucopia, concerning life and food represent the fertility of nature and symbolize female sexual organs. This is however different from the Western knight. The Chinese subject, by making himself the victim of an overtly passionate woman to obtain the objects, can then figuratively suspend his potential tension with Confucian moral constraints. Thus, in the dialectics of Confucian culturalism and naturalism, Mu Guiying's "inborn great strength" has the potential to manifest the Confucian way; or the Confucian way appears rather "effeminate" in front of the "great strength."

Even though the northwestern ethnicity of Mu Guiying's origins is only speculated in the eighteenth century and onwards, Mu Guiying's threats to the paternal authority is ostensibly displayed by her problematic relationship with her father-in-law. In a Chinese family, generally, it is the relationship between the wife and her mother-in-law that is the most intensive. Margery Wolf notes that in the patrilineal family both the bride and her mother-in-law have to create their own "uterine" families to secure their own sense of belonging in the new family.⁶⁹ However, in *Yangjiafu*, learning that her husband was imprisoned by his father who penalized him for his amorous affair that impaired his public duty, Mu Guiying explicitly states her resentment to her father-in-law, "The misfortune of my husband is my own misfortune. My husband is imprisoned for me. He is then me. [The person who imprisons him] is my enemy. How can I not lead the crowd to attack him?" (夫之不幸，即妾之不幸。夫為我囚，彼即我也。乃我之仇敵矣。吾安得而不引眾以攻之哉). In claiming that she is her husband's alternative ego, she then freely switches her role in the marriage with her husband. Her denunciation in *Yangjiafu*

⁶⁹ Margery Wolf, "Uterine Families and the Women's Community," p.36.

is so explicit that the more elite version of *RNS* tones it down by redirecting her anger towards her husband, who does not meet her expectations of coming to take her back to his military camp. Her anger is then depicted as a form of her affection for her husband.

On the other hand, the narratives of Mu Guiying's Khitan sister-in-law, princess Yeü Qiong'e 耶律瓊娥 and Tungut aunt-in-law princess Huang Qiongü 黃瓊女, parallel the gaze at the strange woman in the ballads. The narratives evince the Chinese "orientalist" gaze at the non-Chinese. When Yang Yanlang 楊延朗 is captured by Khitan troops and presented to Empress Dowager Xiao, his dignified speech draws her gaze--"Empress Xiao observes that he is eloquent and passionate in speech and handsome and graceful in appearance, thereupon she feels tenderness in heart" (蕭後見其言語激厲人物豐雅心中甚不忍) (*RNS*); "Empress sees that he is fervent and intense, unparalleled in spirit. She very much adores him" (太后見其慷慨激烈神采超群心甚愛之) (*RYF*). Tungut princess Huang Qiongü reverts to marrying Yang Yanzhao after being berated by Jin Touma 金頭馬, the chivalrous wife of Huyan Zan, as a "shameless" woman (bushi xiuchi 不識羞恥) while she stands naked in the Maze of Bewitchment in order to enchant Song soldiers into a coma. The rhetoric utilized here does not hinge upon the ethnicity of the characters. It is not that Yang Yanlang is admired as Chinese or that Jin Touma is despised as Tungut. It is their behavior and manners (i.e., being naked, speech, and spirit) that have been judged according to a *universal* standard. The self-image of the "unmarked" is mirrored either in the eyes of the "barbarian" or implied in the "barbarian" constructed as the antithesis of the self.

The examples of Mu Guiying and her in-laws suggest that the perception of "non-domestic" women is similar to the perception of non-Han Chinese women. This

similarity is made possible by the culture's logic about its unmarked category of domestic women. Consequently, every other kind of women can be grouped together to form a simplified dyadic relationship: domestic women and non-domestic women, including those residing in the divine realm, in the wilderness, in the lower class, and in a foreign territory. This non-domestic category always presents a threat to domesticated culture precisely because of its unruliness, violence, and unrestrained desire. The fact that Mu Guiying's "inborn divine strength" and "great inborn strength" is made use of as an advantageous instrument in the army means that her existence in the world of normality can be as threatening as barbarian women.

It is precisely Mu Guiying's machismo that becomes the dubious rhetorical locus that gives rise to later racial speculations on her barbarian origins. Even though her home--Wood Tower Mountain Camp (Muge zhai 木閣寨) from where her father derives his surname Mu 木, wood, has no geographical specification, people from the eighteenth century onwards began to speculate on her birthplace. Her imagined birthplace was the core border zone of the Northern Song where the Yang family had resided. It was a crucial military pass in the Baode 保德 prefecture on the northwestern tip of Shanxi 山西 province. There, families of the Xianbei 鮮卑--nomadic descendants of the eastern clan of the Xiongnu 匈奴 in Inner Mongolia-- and of the Dangxiang 黨項-- a new breed of people who developed from the Qiang 羌 people during their eastern movement from the northwestern part of Sichuan to inside the Pass-- intermarried and lived with Han Chinese. The gazetteer of the Qianlong reign speculates that Mu Guiying's surname Mu

was an abbreviated form of the Xianbei surname Murong 慕容.⁷⁰ It further indicates that the wife of Yang Ye, She Taijun 佘太君 was descendant of She Deyi 折德辰, a jiedu shi 节度使 from the celebrated and powerful military Dangxiang family of Fuzhou 府州, who had fought for the Latter Zhou and the Northern Song. The speculation that Mu Guiying is a Xianbei rather than a Chinese is valid on the account that her physical strength and martial skills match the Chinese perception of Xianbei and Dangxiang women in the northwest of China. Dangxiang women are called “strong women” (zhuangfu 壮婦), all of whom “can fight with an arch and a sword.” They enlist to fight for the state and sometimes assemble to plunder herds and salt and to burn down the houses of their enemies. The implied aggressiveness of a strong woman serves as synecdoche for the image of female warriors. The implied aggressive energy of the female body serves as synecdoche for the image of Mu Guiying. Similarly, Chinese literati considered women who travelled from the inner chamber to the public sphere threatening to Confucian society.

While it is impossible to pin down Mu Guiying’s ethnicity, her belligerent energy as well as that of her in-laws on the battlefield is transformed by the narcissistic self into a desire for cultural finesse. As the trope of religious conversion in English elite romances sometimes featured high-born haughty Saracen princesses of passionate sexual desire, enamored with Christian knights and volunteering for conversion from Islam to

⁷⁰ The gazetteer of Baode zhou 保德州 in the northwest border zone of Shanxi province-- the home region of Yang family that during the Five dynasties was a crucial military pass of the Northern Han--compiled in the Qianlong 乾隆 reign (1711-1799) details that a son of Yang Yanzhao “married a woman surnamed Murong proficient in fighting battles. It is said that the Mu Tower Village in the south of Baode is her hometown” (娶慕容氏善戰, 今州南幕塔村猶其故地雲) Zhi Xingsheng 志形勝 in Baode zhouzhi 保德州志, vol. 2 quoted from Tang Kaijian 湯開建, “Mu Guiying renwu yuanxin chuyu dangxiang kao 穆桂英人物原形出於黨項考” in *Yangjiajiang gushi lishi juan*.

Christianity,⁷¹ the trope of foreign princesses and bandit kings' daughters functions similarly to entertain a certain cultural politics. If religious conversion finalizes the imperial conquest as a cultural conquest, then the marriage of non-domestic women either from a foreign country or from outside normal society, to the family of a social elite also implies their cultural assimilation.

In terms of the category of barbarians, scholars have noted that Confucian culturalism tends to assume a cultural superiority over its enemies that can free the subject from fear of cultural elimination by invaders. It is precisely this cultural capital that will eventually assimilate the enemy who cannot desire more than to be acculturated, even after they defeat the Confucian man.⁷² This notion is epitomized as “employing Chinese-ness to transform barbarian-ness” (yongxia bianyi 用夏變夷). This concept presupposes that the labels of “Chinese” and “barbarian” are cultural designations rather than ethnic, social, or geographical distinctions. These dialectics are best articulated by Chen An 陳黯 (ca. 805-876) in his essay “The Chinese Heart” (Huaxin 華心) in the Tang dynasty:

苟以地言之，則有華夷也。以教言，亦有華夷乎？夫華夷者，辨在乎心，辨心在察其趣向。有生於中州而行戾乎禮義，是形華而心夷也；生於夷域而行合乎禮義，是形夷而心華也。⁷³

In terms of geography, there are China and barbarian states, but in terms of culture, are there also Chinese and barbarians? Chinese and barbarians can only be distinguished in terms of their hearts. Differentiating hearts lies in detecting their inclinations. If one is born in the central state but violates the rites and righteousness, then his physical form is Chinese but his heart is barbarian. If one is born in a barbarian

⁷¹ By “sometimes” I mean there are male conversions as well and that not all princesses are haughty.

⁷² John Fairbank, et al. *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation* (Wadsworth Publishing, 1989).

⁷³ Dong Gao 董誥, ed. *Quan Tang Wen* 全唐文 (Shanghai: Shanghai guiji chubanshe, 1990) vol. 767, 3539-3540.

region but behaves according to rites and righteousness, then one assumes the barbarian form but has a Chinese heart.

However, this culturalism comes hand in hand with suggestions of racialism because within its logic, environmental constraints differentiate peoples in terms of physical traits. The Central Plain of North China has proper spatial energy in the cosmos, while the periphery's energies are perverse and inferior. The Xiongnu, for instance, are described in *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 as “with their human faces and animal hearts are not of our kind....their nature is such that they have no sense of gratitude.”⁷⁴

By the Song dynasty, this overt cultural confidence resulted in a rhetoric of restricting the self from contact with foreign people through the maintenance of a tribute system, which then in turn reinforced the sense of Chinese cultural superiority.⁷⁵ The loss of the Sixteen prefectures in the Northern Song and the loss of the entire heartland in the Southern Song meant that there was an feeling of urgency for restoring national unity through war. In the Northern Song, there were two schools of thoughts. The idealistic school of culturalism represented by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) noted that sage kings always emphasized internal affairs and only when the domestic realm stabilized were remote regions to be pacified. The other pragmatic view constantly warned against the dangers of an eventual barbarian invasion and urged for a strengthening of national defense.⁷⁶ In the southern Song, additional resistance to the Jurchen accrued to compete with culturalism. Chen Liang 陳亮 (1143-1194) defied the idea of environmental

⁷⁴ Cited in Wang Gungwu, “The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations With its Neighbours”, in Morris Rossabi (ed.), *China Among Equal* (Berkeley: Berkeley university press, 1982) 47-65, 49.

⁷⁵ Hoyt C. Tillman, “Proto-nationalism in Twelfth-Century China? The Case of Ch'en Liang,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol 39, No. 2 (Dec., 1979) 403-428.

⁷⁶ Tao Jing-shen, “Barbarians or Northerners: Northern Sung Images of the Khitans” in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983). 66-86.

determinism, which was part and parcel of contemporary culturalism, noting that the Chinese had “taken zhongguo and civilization and had lodged them in a remote, periphery place.” However, on the other hand, his complaints about barbarians’ contempt of China indicates that his sense of pride lies in Chinese culture, which is then demarcated from the concept of a polity. With a strong sense of cultural superiority and anxieties over the polity, he introduces strategies for preventing barbarians from entering China and marrying Chinese.⁷⁷

In the sixteenth and seventeenth century many Mongols must have been assimilated into the Chinese population through interracial marriage policies regulated by the state-law *Ming Code*, which prescribed that Mongols and classified peoples cannot marry their own kind unless no Chinese will marry them.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the Ming dynasty is also the dynasty that did not allow alliance marriages with barbarians. Consequently, the trope of foreign princesses marrying Yang family generals in *RNS* and *RYF* simply project a Ming practice of racial and cultural assimilation through internal interracial marriage. The trope of female warriors emerged as the opposite of the *topoi* of Wang Zhaojun, both of which were derived from the diplomatic policies of the polities.

Even though non-domestic women were assimilated to form familial relationships with the Yang family generals, in the world of military romances, the interlocking saga of the Yang Family Generals and their enemies the Khitans consistently emerges as a realm of warfare where encounters between the Chinese and non-domestic

⁷⁷Tillman 403-428.

⁷⁸ “Every Mongol and member of the classified Peoples is allowed to marry a Chinese provided both parties are willing. They are not allowed to marry their own kind; those violating shall be punished with a bastinado of eighty blows and both male and female shall become state slaves. If no Chinese should be willing to marry a Khwarezmian 回回 or a Kibcay 钦察, they shall be allowed to marry their own kind: such a case does not fall within the limitations of the law.”

women are made possible. This assimilation thus appears to be a double-edged sword. While female warriors can be used as a miraculous gender weapon for defense against the feminized other, they equally pose threats to the expansionist familial-cum-military community. As an androgynous being, Mu Guiying is a manly woman, not as a disguised scholar-official or a cross-dressing soldier, but as a women soldier, or a wife-mother warrior. Mu Guiying represents the maternal community of the Yang family, whose reproductive sexuality symbolizes the vitality of familial loyalty. Her “divine strength” also enables her to fight as well as a male warrior. Yet if mothers form bonds with their children to secure their sense of home belonging, how could they allow their sons and husbands to die in war, destroying the bonds that they have created for their home? Furthermore, if women were all enlisted into the army, how could one justify China’s imperial legitimacy as a Confucian state if it cannot distinguish itself from barbarian armies in which men and women intermingle? In a Confucian society where power is exercised by the patriarch, how would one differentiate it from other societies if it was dominated by a matriarch, such as the Khitan Liao that was led by Empress Dowager Xiao?

The emergence and continuity of female warriors in vernacular fiction experienced a process of justification. Its most pressing problem was justifying the obscene presence of female warriors in public. Above all, conditioned by society at large, the sexuality of women characters was represented as an instrument through which Song armies were able to defeat the Liao. For instance, during the attacks of Mu Guiying and her pregnant mother-in-law Chai Taijun in the Maze of the Black Dragon, intense fighting unexpectedly induces Chai Taijun into labor. She gives birth to a baby on a warhorse. Her

postpartum fluids repel the Khitan general, who metamorphoses into a fleeing golden light. Mu Guiying then instantly kills him with her flying dagger. It is not surprising that in traditional Chinese society women were considered “polluted” because of their menstrual blood and postpartum discharge, and because of this, they could be easily connected to dirty, dark, and dead spirits.⁷⁹ In Chinese, *Wu* 巫 (sorcery) directly denotes a witch rather than a wizard. If a woman is marked as “polluted” in a culture because of her reproductive sexuality, she is deemed as inferior to a man, who is by default “clean.” Thus her function in an army is similar to that of a magical weapon, to deal with “the evil.” This is very much like the conventional concept of “using barbarians to quell barbarians” (yi yi zhi yi 以夷制夷).

The magic quality of female warriors is associated with their grotesque and degrading aura, transforming the terror of female vulnerability and exposure in public into laughter and triumph over the barbarian enemy. Mikhail Bakhtin summarizes the “Malbrough theme” from world oral literature in which characters’ unnatural death is associated comically with urination, defecation, and flatulence --all which are related to the lower stratum of the material body. “They are blessing and humiliating at the same time.”⁸⁰ Death, labor, and childbirth are intricately related. Thus the scatological image of female warriors elevates them to the level of a deity as the embodiment of fertility and regeneration.

Xiong Damu’s adaptation of *RYF*, however, tones down such magical attributes of female warriors. Through revising only the words and phrases of the narrative without changing the plot itself, Xiong Damu is able to justify and commercialize Mu Guiying as

⁷⁹ Emily M. Ahern, “The Power and Pollution of Chinese Women,” 193-214.

⁸⁰ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 151.

a virtuous woman without compromising her identity as a warrior. During Yang Zongbao's battle with Mu Guiying, Yang Zongbao in *Yangjiafu* curses her derogatively as a "bitch" (goufu 狗婦) and in *RNS* as a "despicable person" (jianren 賤人). Whereas the metaphor of dogs degrades woman to the level of animality and expresses an explicitly contemptuous and xenophobic sentiment on a group of people supposedly inferior in origin, the adjective "despicable" means a sense of inferiority caused by moral degradation. Then Yang Yanzhao in *Yangjiafu* curses that "a virago as such is very despicable" (cideng pofu shenshi kezen 此等潑婦甚是可憎). In *RNS* he thinks that she is "aggressive and inferior" (pojian 潑賤). Here again, *Yangjiafu* conveys a stronger xenophobic sentiment, through the stereotyping of Mu Guiying as one of the sexually and physically aggressive women who are detested by convention. After the marriage of Yang Zongbao in *Yangjiafu* he tells his servant that she "has very good talents" (shenghao caineng 甚好才能), but in *RNS* he glorifies her as "a hero in a women" (yingxinog nuliu 英雄女流). In the eyes of his mother, her daughter-in-law is "the mate" (ou 偶) of her son in *Yangjiafu*, but is his "fairest mate" (jia'ou 佳偶) in *RNS*. Here, the marriage between Yang Zongbao and Mu Guiying is presented as a "companionate marriage," an intellectually compatible couple who share similar interests in military affairs and respect each other for his or her martial talents in the battlefield, the inverse mirror image of the idealized couple of late Ming society-- a beautiful and cultured wife and her youthful scholarly husband from distinguished families, sharing similar literary interests in composing poetry and reading romantic plays as their leisure activities.⁸¹ The narrator also makes Mu Guiying a rescuer of the new-born baby of her mother-in-law in the *Maze of the Black Dragon* by adding that the child born on the warhorse falls onto the ground.

⁸¹ Ko, 183-190.

Since saving a falling baby is exactly Mencius's metaphor for the humaneness present in everyone's heart (ceyin zhixin 惻隱之心), she through this act then exemplifies the Confucian concept of benevolence. Additionally, Mu Guiying becomes more eloquent in cursing, but less rebellious in her action in *RNS*. These nuanced plot changes greatly enhances Mu Guiying's image without really changing her personhood or womanhood.

How to account for Mu Guiying's transformation in sixteenth-century literary texts? The ubiquitous presence of female warriors in the saga of the Yang Family Generals in its original historical setting of the Song-Liao campaigns already speaks volumes to the Ming readers who regarded the downfall of the Song as being caused by the court's ill treatment of the Yang family generals. Maram Epstein has discussed how in Confucian discourse the appearance of women in public symbolizes abnormality in a gender hierarchy and thus social disorder. The presence of women signals the corruption of the state. The celebrated evidential scholar and loyalist Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 in his *Discourse on the Song Dynasty* (Song lun 宋論) reiterates that the caittiff scholars at court who knew nothing but flaunting empty talk were given too much favor by the emperor who did not notice the paramount importance of military generals like Yang Ye, whose death was caused by such scholars' slander.⁸² This comment might have had implications for the situation of the Ming court.

⁸² Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Song Lun* 宋論, vol. 7.



Figure 2.2: “Lingpo attacks the Crystal Palace,” reprinted from *RYF* (1606)

On the other hand, the double identity of female warriors as both warriors of the country and as sexual threats also seem to indicate that the disordered society that they manifest is simultaneously restored by their very heroism. An illustration from *RYF* printed in the late sixteenth century portrays the scene of Lingpo with the ninth and the eighth sisters embarking on their journey to attack the Crystal Palace in the Heavenly Battle Array. The couplet on the illustration reads: “The widow lives in seclusion to hide her flares, but her scarlet heart is absolutely strong and her chastity is pure; She fiercely attacks the arrays, and a white-head still remains the vigor of a young lad” (隱曜孀居丹惆惟堅清節操, 奮威掠陣白頭猶有少年風) (*RYF* 429). While the widow’s “wifely chastity” (jiecao 節操) and her loyal “scarlet heart” (dankun 丹惆) to the empire mutually reinforce each other, the female warrior’s femininity and womanly nature is intentionally silenced in the rhetoric “The vigor of a young lad” emphasizes her

“masculine spirits.” This text further interacts with the visual elements of three women all in a feminine dress and hairstyle, riding a horse and holding a long sword or spear, and galloping in the wilderness, a space presumably in the territory of the empire. A sense of gender hybridity is evinced by a community of female warriors that represents an imagined community of the purest loyalism and chastity. Their carefree appearance in the wilderness beyond their borders indicates gender transgression, yet it is justified by loyalism, an ideology that simply transcends gender boundaries.

Judith Zeitlin notes that the heroic nature of a woman like Hua Mulan is due to the fact that she “adheres to a lofty masculine code but she preserves her female chastity.” Although Hua Mulan disguises herself as a man to fight on the battlefield, the explicitly sexual and violent power of women present in the realm of men is a completely different story. More often than not, battles in late Ming fiction serve as a metaphor for sexual intercourse. Van Gulik in his work *Sexual Life in Ancient China* notes that “Chinese literature often refers to sexual congress as a ‘battle,’ and... later sexological and erotic books worked out the details of the coitus as military moves on the battlefield.” Scholars also have explored the late Ming obsession of depicting heterosexual and homosexual activities. Clunas has argued that the topic of pornographic images in the Ming suggests links connected to the representation of gender and other hierarchies. Giovanni Vitiello argues that the late Ming cult of love was situated in the exploration of male friendship, whose ideal was an egalitarian chivalric relationship between two men. Although the idealization of the feminine does double as an exploration of the male subject in the sixteenth century, recapitulating the instrumentality of the feminine in a paternalistic society, Vitiello ignores the rise of female readership in the sixteenth century. Louis

Edward demonstrates how Chinese women warriors and Amazons in the mid-Qing full-length fictional works of *Jinghua Yuan* 鏡花緣 and *Honglou Meng* 紅樓夢 are always pitted against a domestic women. Both visions of womanhood interact with each other in a search for “normal and moral rectitude.”⁸³ However, elite female readers might only read these images of female warriors as pure fantasy and entertainment. Robert E. Hegel argues that experienced readers in the late Ming only took pleasure in reading the story of Lü Dongbin, without seriously reflecting on his malicious behavior.⁸⁴

Roger Chartier defines “popular literature” as a kind of relation that is “understood, defined, and used in *styles* (italics mine)” by various social groups through the use of shared cultural products “by society at large.”⁸⁵ Thus meaning is constructed not merely through shared cultural products themselves, but also through cultural consumption, especially in the practice of reading. De Certeau has shown that reading is an activity of “silent production”, performed silently and invisibly, but also evocatively:

The drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectations of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written space in an ephemeral dance... [The reader] insinuates into another persons text the ruses of pleasures and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it. ⁸⁶

The images of Mu Guiying in *RNS* and *Yangjiafu* should be analyzed as their authors’ reading of the saga of Yang family generals as shared and understood by both the elite and the masses.

⁸³ Louis Edward, *Men and Women in Qing China* (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1994).

⁸⁴ Robert E. Hegel, “The Emergence of Genre in Early Chinese Novels,” 22.

⁸⁵ Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Text, Performance, and Audience from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) 88.

⁸⁶ quoted from Chartier, 89.

The anonymous and presumably less elite author of *Yangjiafu* understands Mu Guiying as a “soldier’s wife” (zhengfu 征婦) who lives on the frontier in the shadow of her husband’s danger, as a “peasant wife” (nongfu 農婦) who easily can be called “a dog”, as a individual utilized as a spirit medium, or as a bandit-king’s daughter who is physically and sexually aggressive, less constrained by Confucian morals and thus unrestrained about her emotions. Xiong Damu, on the other hand, by labeling Mu Guiying as the “hero in women” and the “fairest mate” and by making her a living testimony of Mencius’s words, integrates the soldierly woman-- a cultural otherness to the elite--into an image more respected by the Confucian elite: a “she-husband” (nu zhangfu 女丈夫), a talented wife of a companionate couple, and even a “woman martyr” (liefu 烈婦). The fusion of the manly wife trope with that of the female hero or the companionate spouse are rendered possible by the ease at which different labels are applied to Mu Guiying and by the ambiguous meaning of various classifying markers for women in the late Ming. Dorothy Ko has shown that “the very obsession during the seventeenth century with classifying and naming women bespoke a need to create order out of gender confusion.”⁸⁷ What has confused the meaning of various markers on Mu Guiying is precisely Xiong Damu’s rhetorical appropriation of her physical strength, the previously mentioned “inborn great strength” in *Yangjiafu* that has been glorified as “inborn divine strength” in *RNS*. Physical strength thereupon becomes the metaphor of machismo, whose meaning ranges from courage, prowess, intrepidity, to dominance.

In *Nation and Nationalism since 1780*, E. J. Hobsbawm points out that it is impossible to capture “popular proto-nationalism” in pre-modern societies because

⁸⁷ Ko, 117.

language is in the hands of rulers and the literate.⁸⁸ Mu Guiying's transformation simply represents the fuzzy vision of the imagined community present in the minds of the elite. The incorporation of vernacular folklore into a literary military romance through commercial printing demonstrates the mastery and dominance of the elite in the tradition of the *Volk*. In *RNS*, patriotism can be foisted upon the common people to make them loyal to the elite and the state. *RNS* shows that when the blurred boundary between women and men, and between classes, emerges in an empire, one way to prevent the state from becoming susceptible to external threats and to maintain the subjectivity of the empire is through the assimilation of the non-domestic women into the unmarked category of Confucian normality.

The transformation of Mu Guiying illustrates how the literary form of the saga of the Yang Family Generals military romance had evolved in the late Ming. If the myth of the Yang family generals represents "public affairs," then the fictional story of Mu Guiying deals with the "private" and the "individual." The only way to retain the most interesting part of the story, "the private," and carry it to the end is to marginalize it and merge it with the public narrative. Keith McMahon theorizes that late Ming fictional narratives bear the same conceptual structure as that of Wang Yangming's philosophy. The beginning and the end represent *weifa* 未發, which contained by the orthodox ideology and the conflict-ridden middle as *yifa* 已發 exceeds the containment of the ideology.⁸⁹ The transition from *yifa* to *weifa* in *RNS* is the accommodation of Mu Guiying into the military community as a virtuous and patriotic family savior whose social

⁸⁸ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁸⁹ McMahon, 30-31.

menace has been rhetorically mitigated through the appropriation of specific words and phrases, a cipher of her cultural and political identification as well as her assimilation into the late Ming world.

Shameless Princesses, Iron Barbarians, Cross-Bred Tartars: Sexualizing

Intimidating Caitiffs in Military Romance

The other side of the coin about the desire for culture in *RNS* is sexuality and marriage as the only mediums for the assimilation of the non-domestic and the foreign. Sexuality is the basic strategy of *RNS* and of late 16th century China for defining the boundary between “us” and “them”; however, this “them” may include both the non-domestic and the marginal, as well as the foreign.

The Empress Dowager Xiao is depicted as symbolizing the Khitan state in *RNS*. In pre-modern China, it was not uncommon to see non-Confucian societies depicted as the gendered reversal of Confucian society. Thus the enemy Khitan is ruled by a queen rather than a king. Indeed, that four dowager empresses had ruled the Liao dynasty was the characteristic of the Khitan state that late imperial Chinese found the most intriguing. It is then not surprising to see that the Khitan ruler in all the Yang Family Generals narratives is consistently Empress Dowager Xiao (Xiao taihou 蕭太后) even though historically her husband Liao emperor Jingzong 遼景宗 (948-982) ruled for a period of time. Additionally, after the emperor’s death, his eleven-year-old son ascended to the throne, although this resulted in his mother Dowager Xiao being appointed the authoritative regent as Dowager Chengtian (Chengtian huangtaihou 承天皇太后). Since her father was appointed the northern commissioner of military affairs as well as the

northern prime minister, she thereupon gained full control of the Liao state. She was a military commander leading troops to fight in multiple wars, the most famous one being the Chanyuan 澶淵 campaign of 1005.

Dowager Xiao was perceived in the late 16th century as a feminine ruler full of unrestrained desire. Dowager Xiao's legendary presence in the history of Song-Liao warfare seemed to have elevated her beyond national and temporal boundaries in the mind of the sixteenth-century Chinese. She became a prominent semi-god historical figure who rivaled Chinese sage kings. *Dijing jingwu lue* indicates that southwest of the White Cloud Taoist Temple (Baiyun guan 白雲觀), there was a Food-Supply Canal of Dowager Xiao (Xiaotaihou yunliang he 蕭太后運糧河), a canal that was presumably made under the order of Xiao to transport food supplies for Liao armies during their long-distance campaigns. Her wartime canal is depicted as the polar opposite of the Minzhong Temple (minzhong si 憫忠寺), which was built by Emperor Taizong of the Tang to commemorate the perished souls of war. Just as a sinuous and ceaseless river is gendered as the feminine, antithetical to the masculine, a staid temple is easily gendered as masculine. In the vocabulary of late imperial Chinese literati, female politicians governing states implied warlike brutality derived from “the unbridled desire of women” (zong furen zhi yu 縱婦人之欲), which threatened peace-seeking Confucian sage kings (遼主不能以禮率家而恣婦人之欲如此無足). Chinese literati were confident in the universal power of their own culture, believing that women ruled because it was “the Khitan rulers who could not lead the imperial family according to the Confucian rituals” (遼主不能以禮率家).

In contrast to the general notion of the feminized Khitan state, while reading

RNS, one will note that the physiognomic image of the Khitans is depicted as “blue lips, a black face, big ears and obtruded eyes” (chunqing mianhei erda yanzheng 唇青面黑耳大眼睜), appearing masculine, daunting, and intimidating. The Khitan troops are also formidable. Their warriors are “preeminent and intimidating” (weifeng linlin 威風凜凜): Khitan General Yelu Qi’s 耶律奇 “face is like a black iron and eyes are like shooting stars” (面如黑鐵眼若流壘). Xiao Tianyou 蕭天佑 has “a copper body and iron bones and is the reincarnation of a rebellious dragon” (銅身鐵骨乃逆龍降世). The Khitan troops are “faultless” (rongwu qibei 戎伍齊備) and “extremely vigorous” (weishi shenzhuang 威勢甚壯), and their arrows are “as many as flying locusts” (jianru feihuang 箭如飛蝗). Empress Dowager Xiao, although a woman, is extremely intelligent, knowing how to sustain a new campaign after winning a great battle. She also knows how to bait an army into a cliffy valley to ambush them. Both the Chinese and the Khitans chide each other on the battlefield, but even the Song generals glorify the Khitan state as a “heavenly empire” (tianchao 天朝). At times they are “quite frightened and daunted” (poyou juqie 頗有懼怯) and they are berated once by Khitans as “warmongers” (qiongwu liannian 窮武連年). Essentially, the Khitan army possessed a “dark and gloomy” (yinyin chacha 陰陰查查) aura, which the Chinese found challenging to eliminate.

The encounter between the relatively intimidated and effeminate Chinese army and the hyper-masculine Khitans manifests a mingled feeling of fear and curiosity towards the Tartars. To complicate the matter, the “Tartars” in *RNS* may designate an eclectic category of northern barbarians. In *Shuyu zhousilu* 殊域周恣錄 (1571), Yan Congjian notes that the people from the north are born with the cosmological dispositions

of the North. The North is where light is dimmed and wind is formidable. Since this dark and murky realm holds the thickened energy of the universe, the enemies of this realm, “the Huns of the Han, the Turks of the Tang, the Khitans of the Northern Song, the Jurchens of the Southern Song, and the Mongols of the Yuan are by nature as ferocious as attacking eagles and devouring tigers” (如梟之不能不啄, 虎之不能不噬, 乃性氣使然耳).⁹⁰ The wintry, dark, cold-hearted, beastly, and ferocious nature of the Tatars signify their hyper-masculinity in comparison to the “norm” of Chinese dispositions. Additionally, living northwest and northeast of the central plains, Khitans, Jurchens, and Mongols have been categorized by the Chinese as “northern nomadic barbarians” (beihu 北胡 or beidi 北狄), and variously called derogatory names such as, “lu” 虜 (caitiffs), “xienu” 蝎奴 (scorpion slaves), and especially “Tartar” (dada 韃靼)--a term popular in the Ming dynasty after the fall of the Mongol Yuan.

Thus in 16th-century Ming China, the name Tartar might very possibly allude to a more relevant target—the Mongols, even though the term Tartar is a rather loose category that only vaguely designates various tribes of northern peoples. Historically, the Khitans were conquered by Mongols, and the tribe perhaps was gradually assimilated into various northern peoples. On the theatrical stage in the Ming court, however, the Khitans are represented as Mongols. The clowns that played the roles of Khitans spoke Mongol. Their ethnic identity also was shown in their costume caps. General Han Yanshou 韓延壽 in *Opening the Edict to Save the Loyal and Breaking the Heavenly Array* wore a fox-fur hat (humao 狐帽) which generally designated nomadic peoples; Xiao Tianyou 蕭天佑

⁹⁰ Ibid., 504.

and other Khitan generals wore a fox-fur hat with a long strap (lianchui humao 練垂狐帽), a special Mongolian hat.⁹¹

If the battle against the Khitans inevitably reminded Ming readers of the downfall of the Northern and Southern Song after their signing of humiliating peace treaties with the Khitans and Jurchens, then the battle with the Mongols also became an integral part of the memory of the Ming dynasty's triumph over the Mongolian Yuan dynasty, as well as its staunch resistance against the Yuan's recalcitrant remnants, the Oyrat and the Eastern Mongols. The speech of Yu Qian 于謙 (1398-1457), the Imperial Secretary of the Minister of War in the Tumu Debacle of 1449 against the Eastern Mongols, shows how the general insisted on warfare with Mongols instead of a peace accord.

苟以為虜強難制，姑謀和以緩其兵，臣等請質之前代，宋真宗澶淵之役，契丹之眾累被宋兵推阻，既盟之後，朝廷尚歲輸銀絹；徽欽北狩，中國名將韓岳之輩屢敗金師，及奸臣秦檜主和，則朝廷既割境土以與之，復輸歲帛以賄之，甚至降黜尊號，屈己從虜，含垢忍恥，冀免其侵，然而國勢陵夷，無救成敗。援古證今，和議之不足恃也明矣！⁹²

If one considers that the caitiffs are strong and hard to conquer, then one is tempted to compromise in order to slow down their army, we, your ministers, request your majesty to refer to the lessons of previous dynasties. In the battle of Chanyuan by Emperor Zhenzong of the Song, the Khitan soldiers were repeatedly obstructed by Song army. But after signing the Oath, the Song court had to send silver and silk every year to them. Emperor Hui of the Southern Song (1082-1135) conquered the north by himself, and the celebrated Chinese generals Han Shizhong (1089-1151) and Yue Fei (1103-1142) had defeated the Jurchen troops several times, but still the traitorous subject Qin Gui (1090-1155) advocated reconciliation, then the court not only ceded its territory to the Jurchens, but also had to submit silk fabric to curry their favor. Even the emperor's honorable name was demoted. Succumbing oneself to follow the will of the caitiffs and then swallowing dirt and tolerating shame, one only hopes that our country will be devoid

⁹¹ See the chuanguan 穿關 section of *Po Tianzhen* 破天陣 and *Kaizhao jiuzhong* 開昭救忠 in *Guben Yuanming zaju* 孤本元明雜劇, vol. 3. No page numbers provided by the publisher.

⁹² Yan Congjian 嚴從簡, *Shuyu zhousi lu* 殊域周恣錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, Xinhua shudian Beijing faxing suo faxing, 1993) 564.

of their invasion. Yet since the state's situation is threatened by barbarians, nothing could save it from defeat. Using ancient evidence to prove today's case it is illuminating to see the flaws of negotiating a peace treaty [with the caitiffs].

Drawing from the lessons of the Northern and Southern Songs, Yu Qian assumes that in different ages different kinds of northern barbarians would rise to become enemies of Chinese dynasties, although their crafty and devious nature would remain essentially the same. Therefore, the only way to maintain peace is to control such danger through war. Signing peace treaties would cause the Ming dynasty to be caught in a shameful situation similar to that of the Songs.

Mongol does not simply mean the external enemy. This is especially true for the author Xiong Damu, who lived in the far south of China, Fujian. During the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960/979ADE) various non-Han communities immigrated to the Central Plain. Therefore many "Chinese" people living in northern China are descended from nomads.⁹³ After the destruction of the Yuan Empire in 1368, the Mongol population also merged with Chinese and Tibetan populations.⁹⁴ Moreover, both the so-called "Mongols" and "Chinese" included non-Mongols and non-Han Chinese. Most importantly, the Mongols in the Ming dynasty included not only the external enemy of the Eastern Mongols and the Oyriat, but also surrendered Mongol soldiers and officers that had been recruited into the Chinese army, the Mongols at the borders, the Mongol linages dispersed in many parts of China including Beijing, Nanjing, Shandong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Anhui,⁹⁵ as well as the Mongol Yuan empire.

⁹³ See Victor H. Mair, "The North(west)ern Peoples and the Recurrent Origins of the 'Chinese' State," In Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press) 46-84, 205-217. Also see Marc Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

⁹⁴Crossley, "Making Mongols," p.59.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p.59.

Besides the frightful Mongol enemy that was blocked by the Great Wall, there was also the glorious Yuan Empire, which the Ming people admired and hated, and the assimilated Mongol families, who were required to marry Chinese by law, and the military Mongols who were alienated in the army. Mongols played a huge role in armies because of their excellent physical strength and military skills. For instance, Mongolian general Shi Bi 史弼 is portrayed in the *Yuan Official History* compiled in early Ming as a Hercules possessing incredible strength. Despite this perception Mongols were purposefully kept in the lower ranks of the Ming army, separated by ethnicity from other commandery soldiers, with their Mongol leaders devoid of any real authority throughout the Ming dynasty.⁹⁶ A memorial once complained that some Chinese generals changed their names to Mongol names so that they could avoid administrative duties and act unruly.⁹⁷ At that time, many Mongols had adopted Chinese names to avoid racial conflict. This was until a memorial was issued forbidding Mongols from changing their surnames. David Robinson argues that the Ming notion of ethnicity was subject to the notion of state, and that Ming Mongols “became inseparably linked to the imperial military institutions”, which in turn further generated contemporary perceptions of Mongols as Ming military personnel and “their reputation for unruly and often illegal behavior.”⁹⁸ Therefore, the intimidating Tartars in *RNS* may be a mixed image which a Chinese southerner like Xiong Damu may have had imagined about those Northerners living at the northern borders, the Mongols in the armies, and the Mongolian enemies.

⁹⁶ Henry Serruys, *The Mongols in China during the Hung-wu Period (1368-1398)* (Bruxelles: Bruges, Imprimerie Sainte-Catherine, S.A, 1959) 107-120.

⁹⁷ Serruys, 89.

⁹⁸ Robinson, David. “Images of Subject Mongols Under the Ming Dynasty.” *Late Imperial China Volume 25*, p.61, p.109.

The 16th century image of internal and external Mongols is imbued with the notion of sexuality, specifically, cross-breeding. A late-Ming daily-used encyclopedia, *Wanyong zhengzong* 萬用正宗, under the rubric of “the Country of Huns and Tatars” (Xiongnu dada guo 匈奴韃靼國) writes:

其種有五一種黃毛乃山鬼與黃犛牛生，一種短項矮胖者乃燿狻與野豬生一種黑髮白身乃唐兵李靜遺種也一種名突厥乃舍摩舍利海神女與金角白鹿生。一種乃塔巴赤罕之祖。祖史云：蒼白狼與慘白鹿所生。⁹⁹

This breed comprises five types. One with yellow hair, was born from a mountain ghost and a cow. One short-necked, stout and fat, was born of the juejia-ape and a wild hog. One, with black hair and a white body, is the remaining offspring of the troops of Li Jing of the Tang. One is called Tujue; their ancestor was Shemo who was born from a union of the female divinity of the Sheli Ocean and the golden-horned white deer. ... Another breed is of the ancestry of the Tabachi Khan. The History says: this line was born of the grey wolf and pale deer.¹⁰⁰

Adapted from the Tang dynasty compendium of curiosities *Youyang zazu* 猷陽雜俎, the above passage traces the racial origin of the Northern nomads to interbreeding between animals and mystic creatures. The sole exception was a Chinese general who became the ancestor of an abandoned naked and black-haired breed. This hodgepodge of exotic creatures not only reduces the nomads to animality and beastliness, but subjects them to the realm of anachronism and amusement. This rendition of the Northern nomads also naturalizes a certain racial discourse hidden within it—that is the notion that because of their race the nomads are stout and short-necked, and that they are naked and uncivilized. This might be due to the fact that Ming xenophobia and border prohibitions had made the image of Mongols less tangible and hence more distorted in the imagination of late-sixteenth-century society. The ill-fated policy of Sino-Mongol border trade resumed in

⁹⁹Sakai Tadao Kanshū, Sakade Yoshihiro, Ogawa Yōichi hen, 酒井忠夫監修, 坂出祥伸, 小川 陽一編, *Wanyong zhengzong buqiu ren* 萬用正宗不求人 (Tokyo: Kyuko Shoin, Heisei 15, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ Translation quoted from Yumin He’s “The book and the barbarian in Ming China and Beyond: The Luo chong lu, or “Record of naked Creatures,” *Asia Major*, 2012. 43-84.

1550, but it only lasted four months because the Ming court was dismayed by the social and political instability caused by the high volume of illegal trade in Mongol horses and Chinese grain and silk at the border.¹⁰¹

The idea of cross-breeding delivers at once both a sense of magic and a sense of degeneration. In *RNS*, the hyper-masculinity of the northern nomads represents the notion of a magical race as well as that of a demoralized barbarian Other. The illustrations of *RNS* and *RYF* show that in contrast to the Chinese's consistently well-trimmed mustaches, honest faces, and upright posture, the Khitans' sport beards are over their entire chin, with faces that vary from round to and bony, and with facial expressions that appear greedy, stupid, petty, and above all visually inconsistent.



Figure 2.3 (left): “Country of Huns and Tartars,” reprinted from *Wanyong zhengzong buqiu ren* (1609)

Figure 2.4 (right): “Meng Liang bribes the Khitans with a gold helmet,” reprinted from *RYF* (1606)

¹⁰¹ Fisher, 232.

Furthermore, since degeneration and demoralization are all caused by an excessiveness of feminine yin energy, an internal counterpart to the external Other is the traitor, who is the most responsible for the disintegration of a state. Evil minister Pan Renmei 潘仁美 played a crucial role in the tragedy of the Yang Family Generals. Wang Qinruo 王欽若, the Chinese traitor who served as an undercover agent for the Mongols in the Song court, often influenced the emperor into committing wrongdoings. The punishment of traitors in military romances always are the harshest. This harshness against traitors has to do with the philosophy of kingship. The most martial emperor of the Northern Song, Taizong, emphasized the role of internal troubles in the security of the empire in 991: “External threats are only frontier matters which can be prevented from occurring beforehand. But wickedness is without observable form, and when villains make internal trouble it is very frightful. Rulers should pay attention to this.” This philosophy is based upon the concept of yin-yang, which dates back to the orthodox Confucian Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE), who posited that the world of man and the world of nature operate as a harmonious whole, consisting of the mutually counterbalancing and interactive forces of yin and yang.¹⁰² China is yang, and the “barbarians,” an inferior people, and human desires are yin. When yin overrides yang, barbarians and inferior people will simultaneously cause calamities. This concept then was gradually assimilated into the chronotope of Chinese fiction. The Song *pinghua*

¹⁰² According to the orthodox Confucian Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE) in the Western Han dynasty, the world of man and the world of nature operate as a harmonious whole: “Therefore when the human world is well governed and the people are at peace, or when the will [of the ruler] is equable and his character is correct, then the transforming influences of Heaven and Earth operate in a state of perfection and among the myriad things only the finest are produced. But when the human world is in disorder and the people become perverse, or when the [ruler’s] will is depraved and his character is rebellious, then the transforming influences of heaven and Earth suffer injury, so that their (yin and yang) ethers generate visitations and harm arises.” For the theory of Yin and Yang and its relationship to Chinese rulership, see for instance the prose essay “Admonitions for the Throne” submitted to Emperor Renzong by Cai Xiang (1012-1067).

Dasong xuanhe yishi 大宋宣和遺事, which served as the basis of *the Water Margin*, emphasized that the “trickery” (jian 姦) of Cai Jing 蔡京 and Cai Bian 蔡卞 was the central cause of the downfall of the Southern Song.¹⁰³

In the 16th-century Ming Empire, what the Jiajing 嘉靖 emperor would worry about for his regime was not the Mongols but the Chinese. Carney T. Fisher points out that Altan-Khan, in order to persuade the emperor to resume border trade, promised a utopia-like country beyond the Northwestern gateway for farmers from Shanxi, surrendered troops, and White Lotus Sectarials to immigrate to and settle down in.¹⁰⁴ The result was that many Chinese became spies in service of the Mongol ruler. *Ming Shilu* 明實錄 has recorded the apprehension of at least 6 Chinese spies serving the Mongols in 1545 and 1547 and 90 Mongol spies in 1553. In 1556 and 1557, Han Chinese defectors guided the Mongols in their invasion of the Central Plain. The fear that Chinese defectors would seek to guide Mongols in the governance of China reached a climax in 1550 when the court decided to suspend commerce after confronting Altan Khan-led raids which devastated Shanxi province.¹⁰⁵ Thousands of White Lotus Sectarials from Henan, Shandong, and Shanxi continued to rebel against the court and advocated that Altan-Khan ascend to the throne in 1564. The court’s punishment of these Chinese traitors were largely by execution. The most severe punishment--one thousand slices of flesh--were applied to the nine captured White Lotus Sektarian leaders in 1571.

If penalizing traitors was a grim reminder of a disintegrating empire, a comic and witty inverted facsimile of such traitors was Chinese spies stealing exotic magical horses

¹⁰³ Anon., *Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936) 9.

¹⁰⁴ Carney T. Fisher, “Smallpox, salesmen, and sectarians: Ming-Mongol relations in the Jiajing reign (1522-67), *Ming Studies*, 25 (Spring, 1988) 4-8.

¹⁰⁵ *The Ming and Inner Asia, Cambridge History of China*, 237.

from the territory of the Khitan and Yang Yanlang working as an undercover agent to assist the Song in defeating the Liao in the military romance *RNS*. While finding traitors working for the enemy is tragic, the depiction of “our” agents working for our emperor is then light-heartedly amusing and praiseworthy. Mongolian horses had been the chief good in border trade for many centuries, and especially in the sixteenth century. Mongols exchanged them for grain and silk since the Ming court needed a large number of war horses for battle. One way the military romances justify the act of stealing is the claim that these horses are meant to be presented to China as tribute from some remote nomadic country. Additionally, it is the Khitan empress who illegally retains the gift for China that should be sent back. Military romances constantly denigrate China’s nomadic enemies. At the same time, the tragic mood of the heroes who are being circumvented by the baleful traitors is very much diminished. If in history traitors were always to be detected and apprehended by the state, in the military romance *RNS*, heroes are either unaware of them or cannot immediately penalize them. The struggle against traitors is much more mitigated than the struggles portrayed in *zaju* drama.

Ultimately, *RNS* externalizes two aspects of the Mongols--their demoralization and magic derived from their sexuality. In the second half of *RNS*, the meta-figure of the sorcerer and popular religious practitioner Lü Dongbing 呂洞賓 embodies both Khitans and traitors. His supernatural presence and burlesque actions transform weighty reality into the lightness of fantasy. With the intervention of Lü Dongbing and Zhong Liquan 鍾離權 and their subsequent implementation of magic to help Song and Liao troops, the second half of the saga is marked by the influence of folk storytelling and theater

grounded in popular religion and folk rituals.¹⁰⁶ The fact that the notoriously lascivious Lu Dongbin helps the Liao cements the perception of the battle as one between the regimes of gender-- the army of yang and loyalty versus the army of yin and sexuality.

It is not a coincidence that Taoist immortals became incorporated into the saga of the Yang Family Generals. In the Southern Song and Jurchen Jin dynasties, Zhong Liquan was sanctioned as the Taoist lineage ancestor by both the Southern and Northern sects of Inner Alchemy (neidan 內丹) in their construction of the genealogy of their teachers. He further solidified his popularity in the Yuan and the Ming dynasties after the proliferation of the myth in which he calls himself a Han Chinese immortal (Han Zhongli 漢鍾離) during the rule of the Mongols.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, his righteous combat with the notoriously lascivious Lü Dongbin then is naturally fused with the myth of the Yang family's combat with the Liao.

By fusing these three “otherly” groups of people together-- Tartars, demoralized traitors, and the infamous lascivious Taoist immortal-- *RNS* demonstrates that it is essentially Confucian kingship and humanness (ren 仁) that quell rebellions of demoralized barbarians.

The Pleasure of Watching Games, or the Cultural Politics of Miracle Tales:

Imagining an Early Modern Community through Familial Relations

¹⁰⁶ The rise of the plays and stories on the eight Taoist immortals as a group originated in the Song and Yuan dynasties in the Taoist canon of the school of quanzhen 全真, the folk and popular religious ritual activities, and the Taoist fasting rituals (zhaijiao yishi 齋醮儀式). Among them, Zhong Liquan and Lu Dongbin are the most popular figures; Zhong Liquan is the leader of the group. The earliest preserved theatrical plays and fictional works on the eight immortals are from the Ming dynasty. For a comprehensive study of the origins of the eight immortals, see Wu Guangzheng's 吳光正 *Baxian gushi xitong kaolun* 八仙故事系統考論 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 225.

A game is fun to watch precisely because spectators associate themselves with one group of players, hoping for any turning point that would lead their group to victory over the other. The narrative game of military romance is its mechanism of offering many such turning points to readers, allowing them to anticipate the defeat of the northern nomads. It is not an accident that the saga of the Yang Family Generals was selected as the locus of the imagining of national defense through the centuries. By exemplifying a family of loyal generals rather than an emperor or an individual, the romance construction of Confucian familial relationships offers a viable model for its Chinese audience to identify and empathize with. As the saga evolved, the third and the fourth generations of the Yang family were added to the narrative. The longer the familial genealogy, the stronger the centripetal force of a community will become and thus the stronger the power of the example. In addition to the unparalleled loyalty and heroism of the Yang family, which distinguished them from most Chinese lineages, their association with historic Song-Liao war campaigns, which failed to recover Youzhou for imperial unity, made them a remarkable center of attention. Late imperial Chinese history and fiction have thoroughly recorded Northern Song and Southern Song moments of fighting against the Khitans and Jurchens. The Saga of the Yang Family Generals is written, not as a play, but as a historical romance in which the boundary between history and fiction is blurred. The fact that such a line cannot be distinguished also marks the genre of historical romance as a significant vehicle for conveying the nationalist imagination.

The self-multiplying and sprawling narrative of the saga of the Yang Family Generals is made possible by repeated descriptions of miracle tales—that of miraculous medicine, mysterious objects, bewitching battle arrays, Taoist immortals, and female

warriors—all images with magical qualities--becoming an effective medium to illustrate ideology. During the battle at the Nine Dragon Valley, Yang Yanzhao falls into a coma out of an anxiety over the war. Then Zhong Lique appears and formulates an efficacious medicine to cure his malady. The medicine is a blend of the ashes of the mustache of the emperor--kindly bestowed by the caring ruler--and the hair of Empress Dowager Xiao--obtained by Yang Number Four, an under-cover agent and son-in-law of Xiao. Hair in traditional Chinese culture is a symbolic extension of the human kidney and liver, organs that make blood and retain the essence of the body. Cutting one's hair, like cutting one's body, is prohibited unless the act can be justified since it shows irreverence to one's parents, who have made one's flesh and blood. It is precisely the virtue of the rulers who are willing to give away a symbolic part of their bodies to save their subjects that makes the unseemly object a potent antidote.¹⁰⁸ This is a reversed literary allusion to the traditional filial act of *gegu* 割股, literally, cutting off flesh from one's thighs to make a broth to feed one's ill parents.

In a way, defeating the Khitans is like curing a stubborn disease of the Chinese empire. All it requires is magical ingredients from loyal subjects to make wonders happen. *RNS* depicts the tremendous miracle power of the Yang Family generals. After the battle, ten Chinese officials are besieged once again in the Nine Dragon Valley after their failed attempts to reach a peace accord with the Khitans. In contrast to the historical reality, which witnessed the Chanyuan Covenant which stopped the wars, the military romance narrative propels yet another fictional war, attributing it to the “trick of the

¹⁰⁸ The filial piety of the ruler is regulated in the *Classics of Filial Piety* as the source of his ruling: “Love and respect are exhausted on his parents, and thus his virtue and teachings reach the hundred clans, and serves as a model to the Four Seas--Such is the filial piety of the Son of Heaven.” See Legge, *Hsiao King*, p.467-468.

malevolent people” (jianren zhiji 姦人之計), the insatiable Khitans’ desire to usurp the throne of the Chinese. This time Yang Number Four, under the assumed name Mu Yi 木易, as the son-in-law of Dowager Xiao becomes a magical resource. Earlier, he impersonated Emperor Zhenzong to attend a banquet set up by the Khitans, who intended to kill him. After the capture of Yang Number Four, however, the queen admires him so much that she marries her daughter to him. He is able to help the Chinese with a final victory by falsely promising the queen to lead an army to defeat the Song. The narrator does not show evidence of his betrayal or evidence of his loyalty to the Song until one night Heaven witnesses his adamant loyalty: “gentle wind ceases and stars sparkle in the Heavens” (weifeng budong xingdou mantian 微風不動星斗滿天). Both the narrator’s and Yang Number Four’s interesting silence on his unfilial and disloyal behavior towards his Khitan family was later adapted into a prevailing episode of Peking Opera in the nineteenth century, *Yang Number Four Visits his Mother* (*Silang tan mu* 四郎探母). His divided loyalties spoke to the emotions of the audience, who experienced familial separation during wartime.¹⁰⁹

If this narrative surprise shows that loyalty to a Chinese dynasty can eclipse loyalty to a “barbaric” state and obstruct one’s filiality to one’s “barbaric” mother-in-law, then the third narrative marvel shows that loyalty can completely obstruct one’s filial piety to one’s own parents. However, filiality still strengthens loyalty. During Yang Zongbao’s conquest of the Kingdom of the Western Xia, he and his soldiers are besieged in a Tangut-occupied valley because they are “unfamiliar with local geography” (dili bushu 地理不熟). Fearing the battalion’s imminent defeat and death, as they are cut off from their food supplies and the outside world, he dispatches a soldier who

¹⁰⁹ Idema, “Introduction,” p.2

metamorphoses into a black dog to run to the Song capital at Kaifeng to ask the emperor to send troops to rescue. No commanders are available for the trip since they are all defending other parts of the imperial border. The only option left is to recruit new warriors of the highest caliber to form a regiment. Learning of this, Yang Zongbao's grandmother She Taijun 佘太君 "cannot help but groaning in great sadness" (haodong buzhi 号恸不止) because if one more day is wasted on recruiting, her grandson will be closer to his death. Then Yang Zongbao's wife Mu Guying, his two aunts, and the twelve widows of She Taijun's twelve martyred sons, voluntarily form a battalion to save the youngest male in the Yang family. After yet another five rounds of battle, Zongbao is rescued and the Northern Song is able to conquer the Western Xia.

In a time of dynastic crisis, history has it that widows starve to death to demonstrate their loyalty and filiality. In sixteenth century Ming China, widow chastity already had become elevated to a major marker of morale for local counties. However, in the military romance *RNS*, martyr widows turning into female warriors is essentially driven by the desire to fulfill their filial duty of helping the Yang lineage survive on, even though it also simultaneously and *miraculously* reinforces loyalty. For *RNS*, it is the perfect solution for reconciling the conflict between filial duty and loyalty. The triumphant ending fulfills the fantasy of loyalty and covers up the fear of familial extinction.

The unrestrained consumption of the Yang Family warriors seems to imply that the empire can interminably exploit human resources to survive. Indeed, it is assumed that any person, man or woman, young or old, from the Yang family will be a true warrior in the battlefield and will "bring fortune to the imperial court" (chaoting zhifu 朝廷之福).

More importantly, in a military romance, human resources on the battlefield are battle arrays, *zhen* 陣, formed by tens of hundreds of warriors. Battle arrays are omnipresent in every combative scene in traditional Chinese military romances. They are the vocabulary capitalized to create wartime realism in the fictional space, for the battles between the warriors of rival camps as well as the subsequent strategies, tactics, and personages involved are major points of action in military romances. Confrontations between different battle arrays, with their intensity in depicting verbal and physical aggression are the *sine qua non* of portraying warriors--their military erudition and personality – as well as their exploration of moral issues.

Each battle in the romance consumes thousands of lives. It is especially so in the early military romances like *RNS*, which depict war and Confucian morals through the convention of storytelling with due seriousness. After every major campaign, the narrator will rhetorically and ritually emphasize the cruelty of war.¹¹⁰ “Four hundred thousand barbarian soldiers are slaughtered; layers upon layers of corpses, blood flushes the whole plain field” (殺死番兵四十余万，尸首相叠，血流满野); “Corpses clutter on the ground; blood floods the long plain” (屍橫散亂血滿長川). The narrator constantly reminds the reader that every triumph of the Song army is a genocide and comes at the expense of the suffering of many individuals and families.

On the other hand, the story’s legendary heroes are paragons of the loyal subject and filial son because one has to be filial in order to be loyal in imperial China. While stylized combat in the fiction involves duels between two leading heroes, invincible martial skills and distinctive weapons become the principle characteristics for

¹¹⁰ C. T. Hsia has noted the differences between the late Ming and early Qing romances with the mid-Qing romances. See, “The Military Romance,” p. 378-390.

representing individuals of unswayable dedication. The Yang Family Generals are loyal because they fight through all sorts of battles. They are also filial because they fight through every battle-- they not only unequivocally follow their father's military career to serve the country, but also take foreign brides as trophies to produce descendants to continue the lineage. Indeed, the act of killing becomes the trial and confirmation of their loyalty and filiality. They kill to survive, or they will be killed. Additionally, their survival not only means that the state can continue exist, but more importantly that their own family can continue to survive.

In a military camp, the father-son relationship might dissolve if the son has a higher rank than the father. When Yang Zongbao summons his father to fight in the Maze of the White Tiger it is almost fatal for his father. Had the battle not been successful through Mu Guiying's rescue, the son could have killed his father. In the world of violence, how can one be sure that one can retain both loyalty and filial piety, both loyalty and friendship, and both loyalty and affection to one's wife and children? The military romance only seems to convey the idea that if the empire is not really restored to its full glory, then familial and personal tragedy is allowed to occur at any contingent moment. The episode of *Theft of the Bones* in both *Yangjiafu* and *RNS* expresses this dilemma.¹¹¹ After the battle at the Nine Dragon Valley is finished, Yang Ye's soul appears in a dream of Yang Yanzhao, requesting him to bring back his bones from the foreign site of Youzhou and to have them properly buried in his hometown. His bones are subject to daily humiliation by the Khitan at the Bright Sky Pagoda at Youzhou, and he implores him to save him from this ordeal. This is a quintessential Chinese expression of home-

¹¹¹ Both the two Ming novels narrate the theft of the bones of Yang Ye. Idema suggests that it is very probably that the source is derived from a zaju play on the subject named Haotianta 昊天塔.

belonging-- having one's bones buried in one's hometown to be close to one's ancestors and descendants. No matter how far one has travelled in life, nothing is more tragic than dying in a foreign land. If his ghost is not properly served with offerings by his descendants, he will become a miserable wandering ghost not even to accepted in Hell. Yang Ye then warns his son to be aware of the devious trick of Empress Dowager Xiao of deceiving him into bringing back fake bones of him ten years ago from the Red Goat Grotto. For sure, individuality and authenticity do not exist in a foreign land. Without identification from his family, friends, and colleagues, how can one person and his ghost be differentiated from another person and his ghost? It is even more unthinkable to visually identify one's father out of a few bones when all his physiognomic and physical traits have vanished.

The trickery of barbarians is always the compelling force of the narrative of a new set of military encounters. The only reason a narrative continues to sprawl is because the barbarians are still not vanquished, even after the tremendous success of defeating the Heavenly Gate Battle Array. Because of this Yang Yanzhao dispatches Meng Liang to set out on one more journey to Youzhou to fetch the bones. Rumor of this journey is heard by his best friend Jia Zan 焦贊. Eager to gain merit for himself, he hurries to Youzhou without notifying anyone else. It turns out that they both reach the right terrace where the bones are guarded by Khitan soldiers in the evening. In the pitch-black darkness, Jiaoan accidentally touches the heel of Meng Liang while climbing after him on the terrace. Fearing that it is a Khitan soldier who has come to capture him, he hastily cleaves his head off with an ax. Upon seeing that it is his best friend, his heart is broken, and he commits suicide.

This tragedy seems only to occur by contingency, but the sole momentum that propels this narrative is belief in the deception and deviousness of barbarians. It occurs exactly like Yang Yanzhao's nightmare about his father, whose bones are humiliated daily by the Khitans. How would the Chinese treat their friends and families if they all lived in the deep awareness and affliction of a deceiving and devious enemy being present anywhere, at anytime? Accidental tragedies would definitely increase, and this only weakens the state's resistance to the enemy. While this tragedy was originally narrated as a *zaju* play whose rhetoric evokes a communal sentiment of horror, it is only embedded in the military romance as one of the many episodes of this sprawling narrative. The tragic sentiment is sublimated into yet another narrative of battle, through which the Chinese once again achieve victory. The sprawling narrative of the military romance can be visualized by its map (Figure 2.1). Every military trip that returns back to the capital of Kaifeng will then turn into another trip away from Kaifeng. One barely knows which battle is the beginning and which battle constitutes the end of a campaign. It is as if the battles can continue *ad infinitum*. Overall, the explosive shape of the clusters of trip routes also seem to mean that the regions covered by the routes are all eventually pacified by the Ming.

It is also because killing is overtly primitive, barbarian, and interminable that the military romance particularly emphasizes the deployment of military strategies for the breaking of magical battle arrays. Breaking military formations is like a game of go that requires wisdom and erudition. After all, Chinese defeat barbarians by brains and not by violence. Magical military formations have their real historical counterparts. In the centuries between the Northern Song (960-1127) and the Southern Song, the Chinese

government's concern with national defense through warfare fostered a substantial production of military manuscripts (bingshu 兵書) from 45 works that comprises 289 *juan* in the *Jingjizhi* 經籍志 of *Jiu tangshu* 舊唐書 to 347 works comprising 1956 *juan* in the *Yiwenzhi* 藝文志 of *Songshi* 宋史. These manuscripts are concerned with military formations, strategies, and cosmology. In particular, all the Song emperors designed formations such as *Dongxi guaizima zhen* 東西拐子馬陣 and *Wanquan zhentu* 萬全陣圖 to protect Chinese armies from the frightful attacks of the Khitan battalions.¹¹² In the Ming military manuscripts continued to flourish. In anti-Japanese pirate battles, Ming general Qi Jiguang 戚繼光 invented Mandarin Duck battle arrays, which emphasized teamwork and techniques associated with the concept of yin yang: the static and kinetic aspects, the guarded and unguarded portions of the body, the frontal and lateral alignment, and the defensive and offensive potentials.¹¹³

Thus when they evolved into the chronotope of military romance, real battle arrays began to be represented only symbolically: they often times correspond to heavenly constellations. Magical and fantasized military formations become quintessential “Chinese” products of wisdom. That “barbarians in tradition have no battle arrays” (番人素無隊伍) suggests that only the Chinese can devise intricate and complicated military formations such as the Seventy-Two Heavenly Gate Battle Arrays.

These military formations, as an integral part of the narrative of miracle tales, already

¹¹² For the Song emperors' military formations, see Tang Jingwu 唐經武's *Zhongguo bingxue zhenfa shi* 中國兵學陣法史, vol. 1. Taipei: Dajin yinshua youxian gongsi, 1985. p.564-613. For Khitan formations, see Karl A. Wittfogel and Feng Chia-Sheng's *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907-1125)* Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949. C. T. Hsia has also suggested a connection between the Saga of the Yang Family Generals with Song military manuscripts and the Song government's concern of national defense. See note in C. T. Hsia on Chinese Literature.

¹¹³ Huang, p. 174.

demonstrates the wisdom of the Chinese, simultaneously covering up the tension between filial piety and loyalty and the erasing of the stain of blood in warfare.

The relationship between violence, filiality, and loyalty has remained an important political debate in traditional China since at least the Spring and Autumn period. For Mencius, killing prevents a person from cultivating his innate self as a filial son or benevolent ruler. A virtuous ruler should not rule by killing, but only through the use of his benevolence to invoke the innate humaneness of his people and the barbarians.¹¹⁴ For the school of legalism represented by Han Feizi 韓非子, killing exposes the conflict between filial piety and loyalty and reveals whether a ruler is a good one or not. A son who is unwilling to fight as a soldier and sacrifice his life for his ruler because he wants to take care of his father at home is a real filial son. A benevolent ruler would not ask a filial son to kill or die for him.

Filial piety is an instinctive feeling, a natural bond between children and parents, rather than an imposed responsibility between the subject and the ruler. Whereas filial piety in a paternalistic society is by default between a son and a father, the relationship between a mother and her child evokes the most instinctive feelings of human beings. The inseparability of women and children from the male community in the saga of the Yang Family Generals marks the fundamental significance of portraying motherly, wifely, and childlike images. Geraldine Heng has argued that in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, the crux of the nationalistic imagination demands "motherly" and "familial" images to accommodate some specific sentiments and contemplations that are difficult to channel

¹¹⁴ “君子之事亲孝，故忠可移于君” in Legge, *Hsiao King*.

Han Feizi uses the stories to make the point that there is insurmountable conflict between personal morality and political loyalty. “上下之利，若是其异也，而人主兼匹夫之行，而求致社稷之福，必不几矣” in *Han Feizi Wu Du*, 韓非子五蠹.

otherwise.¹¹⁵ These maternal images are the precursors of the idea of a “motherland” or a “homeland.” It then should be argued that in the *zaju* play *Theft of the Bones*, Yang Ye’s bones that are held in Youzhou speak to an acute sense of trauma, literarily a nightmare, felt by the literati and the audience, about the disunity and division of their country. However, this sense of trauma is symbolized in the military romance by the repressed and unspeakable mourning and affliction of She Taijun, Yang Ye’s widow wife, and in the nineteenth century by Mu Guiying. Such grieving about the lost of one’s husband, sons, and grandsons drive cultural impulses and the imagination of nationalism in modern times. These impulses remained marginal in the sixteenth century, when the exultant obsessions in the deployment of strategies to break magical and metaphorical formations overrode the undercurrent of pain.

Instinctive reactions initiate moral reasoning, and an emphasis on wisdom and sophistication also alleviates the pain incurred through violence. Reading how a son, a wife, a mother, or a brother saves his or her family in a desperate situation, one hopes that one is not the person in such a situation and that the person in the situation can survive the crisis. Similarly, if imagining our relatives suffering is unbearable, imagining their vision and intelligence is comforting and assuring. It is hence not surprising to know that the ending of *RNS*, “twelve widows conquering Western Xia” (shi’er guafu zhengxi 十二寡婦征西), originated in a tongue-in-check attempt to ratify the appearance of twelve courtesans dressed in pure white on horseback in a funeral processions, made to represent the twelve auspicious animals used to exorcise demons and evil spirits for the dead and

¹¹⁵ Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press) 208.

the living.¹¹⁶ Freud says, “... mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of the one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal.” Mourning without melancholia is the ending of the military romance; however, such mourning is also associated with the *emblematic* implementation of the military skill and magical battle arrays conducted by the twelve widows. Such an ending that treats the defeat of the enemy as a ritualistic exorcising of evil spirits speaks to a sense of narrative paranoia in the late imperial discourse of depicting “the other”.

¹¹⁶ Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺, “‘Shi’er guafu zhengxi’ ji qi xiangguan wenti—Liu Rushi biezhuang xiaocetiji” 十二寡婦征西及其相關問題——柳如是別傳下冊題記, in his *Zhang Zhenglang wen shi lunji* 張正烺文史論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 2004) 773-783.

CHAPTER THREE
GEOGRAPHY AND LITERARY GENEALOGY:
MYTHOLOGY, GENESIS, AND THE PERFORMATIVE TRADITION OF *JOURNEY
TO THE WEST*

Introduction

Chapters three and four focus on the magic-travel romance *Journey to the West* whose first extant edition dates to 1592. Focusing on the debate on *Journey to the West* with regards to its tension with historiography in the late Ming, the chapter starts with the fact that *Journey to the West* was regarded as a joke about history in the late Ming and the fact that Xie Zhaozhi 謝肇淛 traced the genealogy of *Journey to the West* back to *Mu Tianzi zhuan* 穆天子傳 (Romance of King Mu), the earliest fictional narrative based upon the *Guideways of Mountains and Seas*. It then highlights the divergent generic conventions of recording the world established by the *Guideways* and the *Records of the Great Historian*. The *Guideway*'s ritualistic and spatial narration gave rise to the story of *Mu Tianzi zhuan* that is oriented in the four-direction spatial configuration. Second, the chapter switches to highlight another important moment for the genesis of *Journey to the West* in the Tang dynasty when biographical historiography of Tang Xuanzang and Buddhist miracle tales were intricately related and when the emergence of the Tang transformation texts created new vocabulary (magical contest, shapeshifting monsters, and religious conversion), and narrative paradigm for representing a human's linear quest journey in the world where empire and religion are mutually dependent. Third, the chapter goes on to delineate how Sandy emerged as a cannibalistic demon converted as a

Buddhist disciple from the de-centered cosmos where the linear quest journey is futile in *Datang sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話; as a Muslim in the Yuan zaju drama *Xiyou ji zaju* 西遊記雜劇 where female victims, goddesses, and demons take the center of the stage to feature the illusion of desire in the mundane world; and as a symbol of evil in the liminal community of various local Mulian ritual dramas that involve the trope of “journey to the West.”

Ludicrous Tale or Real Myth?: Debates on *Journey to the West* in the late Ming

Some of the eminent literati scholars in the late Ming simply thought *JW* a nonsensical joke in comparison to the real historiography of Tripitaka's pilgrimage.¹¹⁷ In *Meigong jianwen lu* 眉公見聞錄, the eminent scholar Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) compares a babbling old man to *JW*:

萬曆壬辰甲午間，有老人自稱數百歲人，言常見高皇帝尹鋒頭。又言海外之國，行游者凡數萬里，遇猿猴時頂山果於首以獻我，若群從人，則撒果于地不首獻

¹¹⁷ Insomuch as both serious and jocular attitudes towards Tripitaka's pilgrimage existed in the late Ming, different readers had opposing opinions on *JW*. Most Qing literati took the fiction as a serious religious book, completely dismissing the joke in the ending. In 1697, for instance, You Tong 尤侗 comments that *Journey* is a book that explicates the teaching of the sage, Buddhist canon *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 and *Yi Jing* 易經. In 1749, Zhang Shushen 張書紳 claims that it “embraces the cosmos” (baoluo tiandi wanxiang 包羅天地萬象), but as a “book of proving the way” (zhengdao shu 證道書) it is not to prove the way of Buddhism, but the way of Confucius. Zhang Hanzhang 張含章 thinks it a book of the Three Teachings. All they concern is “the original theme” (yuanzhi 原旨) of the fiction. On the other hand, some thought *JW* a joke. Yuan Yuling 袁于令 (1592-1674) thinks *Journey* “extremely fantastic” (huanji 幻極). Chen Yuanzhi 陳元之 regards it “ludicrous and burlesque” (miyou huangtang 謬悠荒唐). Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淞 (1567-1607) considers the fiction “inappropriately fantastic and nonsensical” (huanwang wudang 幻妄無當). A reader comments that “there is a work called *Journey to the West*. Its words are ridiculous. Wise people reprimanded its falseness. Stupid people believed in its truthfulness” 有西遊記之作其言荒誕智者斥其非愚者信其真.

也。老人號醒神，鬚眉及眼睫毛皆白，其實一社日生人耳。陸伯達曰：聽醒神老人語正是一本活西遊記，猷可笑。¹¹⁸

In the Jiawu year of Wanli reign, there was an old man who called himself Man of One Hundred Years. He said that he can see Emperor Gao very often. He also said that he had traveled in the country beyond the seas for thousands of li where he met monkeys who from time to time presented to him with fruits placed on their heads. If he followed the crowd, that the monkeys would abandon fruits on the ground. The old man's style name was Awakened God. His beard, eyebrows, and eye slashes were all white. But he was actually a new member of the sacrificial rites of the Earth God. Lu Boda says, what the old man of Awakened God speaks of is exactly a living version of *Journey to the West*, which makes it even more ridiculous.

The illiterate villager personifies *JW* as a nonsensical and ill-informed storyteller, a storyteller that nonetheless has the enchanting skill of making up a story. What is evinced is that Chen Jiru's anxieties over *JW* do not represent history *realistically*. That is, he presumes that *JW* is realistic account of the world which it fails to be; but still, he unconsciously and persistently surmises *JW* as a historic account. So the anxieties always exist.

Psychologically, the fact that *JW* makes a joke as a deluded old man does for Chen Jiru could be viewed as his perverse behavior as an avant-garde against a bigoted community. He expresses his scorn of popular religious performances and naive fabrication of the world and his worship of realistic accounts as history on the one hand, and evinces his fear of the power of age, supernaturalism, and popular religious tradition as embodied in the old man's self-made title "awakened god" and his involvement in local ritual theater. Like the joke itself, whose value is precisely its capacity of being told again and again to achieve catharsis between the teller and the audience and thus to form the bond of a community in *JW*, Chen Jiru's perverted telling of the joke secures his elite identity and control of cultural power in terms of his aesthetic and epistemological

¹¹⁸ Also see Jibu zhang 磯部彰 and Wang Xiaolian 王孝廉 trans., "Xiyou ji de jiena yu liuchuan" 西遊記的接納與流傳 in *Zhongguo gudian xiaoshuo yanjiu zhuanji* 中國古典小說研究專集 Vol. 6 (Taipei: Lianjing chubanshiye gongsi, 1983) 141-172.

inclination towards realistic representation of the world as opposed to imaginary accounts. What Chen Jiru's anxieties indicate is a split tradition of cosmological records that have different directions of recording the world--the trend of historiography and geography, and the trend of mythological and religious accounts associated with ritual performances.¹¹⁹

In *Wenhai pisha* 文海批沙, Literatus Xie Zhaozhi 謝肇淛 defended for *JW*'s fictionalization and mythification of history:

俗有西遊記演義，載玄奘取經西域道遇魔崇甚多，讀者皆哂其俚妄，余謂不足嗤也。(Zhu 119)

There was a *Romance (yanyi) of Journey to the West* which records that Xuanzang encountered quite a lot of demons and spirits on his way to the Western regions to fetch sutras. Readers all laughed about its *vulgarity and ridiculousness* (*liwang*). I personally think *Journey to the West* does not deserve such contempt.

The term *liwang* 俚妄, literary means vulgarity and ridiculousness. *Li* often denotes popular literature that is widely accepted and known by common people such as popular songs, folk tales, and popular religious and dramatic performances. These popular literatures are *li* because they are vulgar, folky, and lack of the elite sensitivity to psyche and accuracy to historiography. *Wang* 妄, however, means lie and boasting, suggesting the fact the literati consider *JW* as *deviating* from a realistic depiction of the history.

Xie Zhaozhi further complicates the matter of historiography more by revealing how history is itself full of mythical elements.

神農嘗百草，一日而遇七十毒；黃帝伐蚩尤，迷大霧，天命玄女授指南車；禹治水桐柏，遇無支祁，萬靈不能制，庚辰始制之；武王伐紂，五岳之神來見，太公命時粥五器，各以其名進之。至於《穆天子傳》、《拾遺記》、《梁四公》又不足論也。《西游記》特其濫觴耳。

Shennong used to taste a hundred herbs (to discover their medical uses). In one

¹¹⁹ Richard Strassberg has noted the bifurcating trends among narratives of recording the world.

day, he had encountered seventy poisons. The Yellow Emperor set a warfare with Chiyao, and he was lost in a great fog. The Heaven ordered the Dark Lady to teach him how to make Compass. While the Great Yu was taming the flood, he met Wu Zhiqi--a tameless water ghost. All the spirits could not conquer it. It was not until the god of Genchen appeared to tame it. When King Wu had a war with Zhou. The Gods of the Five Mountains came to greet him. Taigong then ordered to submit five vessels to the gods. As for the *Romance of King Mu*, *Romance of Picking Up the Lost*, *Fourth Duke of Liang*, they are not worth mentioning. *Journey to the West* is under their influences.

It is uncertain whether Xie Zhaozhi attempts to argue that historiography itself is full of unprovable mythical elements or whether that the history we know as it was then (in the 16th century) is already a history that has been accumulatively rewritten and revised by different peoples in different generations. What is certain is that Xie Zhaozhi considers myths as undeniably real events in history, even though the myths Xie Zhaozhi cites are derived more from unofficial geographical and mythological accounts than from official historiography. It is *Huainanzi* 淮南子 that first records “the seventy poisons” encountered by Shennong. It is in *Longyu hetu* 龍魚河圖 (River Atlas of Dragons and Fish), a geography book full of mythical stories that we first read the episode on the Dark Lady’s teaching of the Compass. The entry related to Wu Zhiqi in *Guideways* is long lost in extant versions, not to mention that Tang people might have made up the origin of Wu Zhiqi in *Guideways* since the monster appears in the Tang encyclopedia *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. As for the story on the Gods of the Five Mountains in the tale of King Wu’s battle with Zhou, it might have originated in *Tang Huiyao* 唐會要. Nonetheless, Xie Zhaozhi still maintains the binary of history and fiction in which history is superior to fiction since the fictional works such as *Romance of King Mu* is “not worth mentioning.”

Xie Zhaozhi’s attempt to valorize and elevate *JW* by fusing mythical elements with history and by equalizing mythical events with fiction such as *JW* evinces his vision about the genealogy of *JW* that is originated in the historical canon *Guideways* based

upon which *Romance of King Mu* and *Records of Picking up the Lost* are written. As for the *Record of Fourth Duke of Liang* written in the Tang dynasty, it is about how the erudite subject of Wu Emperor of the Liang dynasty, fourth Duke of Liang explains to the emperor the nature and attributes of various exotic and mythical tribute objects presented to him from around the world and details information of foreign countries, oftentimes fantastic, where the emperor has never been. The spatial configuration of the fictional narrative of *Fourth Duke of Liang* is still based upon the four-directional spatial design constructed by the *Guideways*. Even though Xie Zhaozhi was completely ignorant of the performative and oral tradition of *JW* that can be traced back to the Tang transformation text, It is to this earliest but strongest narrative tradition that my following analysis is drawn to before I switch to the Tang dynasty to discuss the influence of transformation texts.

Children of Zhuanxu and the Xia Lord Clan: the Genesis of the Splitting Tradition of Cosmological Records

The tradition started as early as the 4th-1st century BCE when *Guideways through Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhai jing* 山海經, ca. 320 BC-AD 200, attributed to Yu the Great or Da Yu 大禹, hereafter *Guideways*) was compiled. In *Guideways*, the West, for instance, is a western land beyond the seas called “the Great wilds” (dahuang 大荒).

西北海之外，大荒之隅，有山而不合，名曰不周，有兩黃獸守之。有水曰寒暑之水，水西有濕山，水東有幕山。有禹攻共工國山。有國名曰淑士，顓頊之子。有神十人，名曰女媧之腸，化為神，處栗廣之野，橫道而處。¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Guo Pu 郭璞, *Shan Hai Jing* 山海經 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987).

Beyond the sea in the northwest, in the corner of the great wilds, there is a split mountain that is named *buzhou*. Two yellow beasts are guarding it. There is a river called the River of Cold and Heat. To the west of the river stands the Moist Mountain. To the east of the river stands the Curtain Mountain. The great Yu was attacking Gonggong at the State Mountain. There is a country named Shushi, descendants of Zhuanxu. There are ten deities who are named as intestines of Nü Wa. They transformed into gods living across the wilds of the vast millet fields.

This passage, like others in the *Guideways*, as a representation of certain spatiality does not feature an event, a central subject, nor a well-marked beginning, middle, and end.

Above all, since there is no temporality, it cannot even be called a narrative. As Richard Strassberg indicates, depictions of sacrificial offerings shown in the familiar territories are lacking in the chapters on the Great Wilds so that it seems the Wilderness is an irrelevant territory. If the act of rites strengthens humans' relationship with Nature and with its sacrificial cycles, then here is the place where human time ends. Yet the descriptions' very connection with Chinese mythology suggests that there is indeed a certain narrativity to it. When torrential oceans disappear here, the structure of the cosmos ultimately is revealed. It is precisely because it indicates that here stands *axi mundi*, Mount Buzhou previously broken by Gonggong during his battles against Zhuanxu as a derivative war between Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor, that the reader can be certain of his knowledge of the cosmos and its myth. It affirms and explains why the sky slants towards the southwest and the sun and the moon descend in the west. The west then defines the boundary of the *Chinese* mythological space and time. But since we do not know how the children of Zhuanxu who is the grandson of Yellow Emperor are related to the ten deities growing out of the intestines of Nü Wa who produced the human race with her brother Fu Xi, we are not sure how Zhuanxu's children and Nü Wa's personified and deified bodily parts are related to "us." Even though certainly there is a

shared origin between “us” and the people in the west, the passage considers it sufficient to name and to identify strange creatures and places. But even without any temporality rendered to this territory, the people in the West are not derivatively relevant but essentially integral to the knowledge of the world. Here, it is not the West that is the other. It is the human subject (we) and human time (our time) that are the other.

Readers of the *Guideways* often are aware of its mythological quality as opposed to the realistic accounts of the world. The first noted reader is the Grand Historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 15-c. 86 BCE): he not only berated the *Guideways* for its fabrication by contrasting it with the report of the Chinese emissary Zhang Qian 張騫 (d. 114 BCE) based upon his travel to the numerous kingdoms in Central Asia on a diplomatic mission from 139--126 BCE, but created the tradition of recording “barbarians” in Chinese official historiography.

Sima’s “The Account of the Xiongnu” in his invented historiographical form, a “biographical history” (jizhuan ti 紀傳體), unlike earlier chronicles, organizes history in terms of human subject (we) by narrating lives of notable persons (biographies or *liezhuan* 列傳), genealogies of eminent families and clans (*shijia* 世家), and biographies of rulers of the states (*benji* 本紀). The “biographical” account of the Xiongnu as listed under the rubric of *liezhuan* rather than *shijia* or *benji*, categorized together with other types of marginal communities such as merchants in *huozhi liezhuan* 貨殖列傳 and scholars in *rulin liezhuan* 儒林列傳 then treats the Xiongnu as a special group marked by their identity as “xiongnu,” the same as merchants are marked by their materialism (*huozhi*, literally means multiplying goods), and scholars marked by their *ru* 儒--a community of unstable income and weak social status. But it is hard to pin down what the Xiongnu means and who they are. “Xiongnu” is presumably a loanword that transliterates

into Chinese from a lost language that the legendary Xiongnu people used to designate themselves. The linguistic reconstruction of the ancient Chinese pronunciations of the name, “xon-NA,” does not help us identify what it means and how it is pronounced in another foreign ancient language.

What we know from the narrative of Sima is that he begins the “biography” of the Xiongnu by describing their ancestor as “a descendant of the Xia lord clan by the name of Chunwei. Since before the time of Tang and Yu [i.e., the sage Yao and Shun, there have been Mountain Rong, Xianyun, and Xunyu]” (匈奴，其先祖夏後氏之苗裔也，曰淳維，唐虞以上有山戎獫狁葷粥) (Watson 2: 129; Sima 1154).¹²¹ Here Sima tries to trace the ancestry of Xiongnu by sorting out the various exotic names that designate the *same* tribe in order to construct a stable subject with a long history of evolution. In so doing, he nonetheless does not deviate too much from the *Guideways* in terms of the perspective that the Xiongnu and the Chinese have a common ancestor. Whereas Sima says that the Xiongnu are descendants of Yu 禹 (first ruler of the Xia dynasty), the *Guideways* states that Quanrong 犬戎 is descended from the Yellow Emperor (who is Yu’s ancestor). But unlike the *Guideways*, by trying to construct a coherent foreign subject, Sima confuses the reader as in explaining how the Mountain Rong, Xianyun, and Xunyu are related to the Xiongnu. Obviously if they are the Xiongnu’s ancestors, then Yu who came after Yao and Shun, could not be the sole ancestor of the Xiongnu.¹²²

¹²¹ The edition of *Shiji* I use is Kametaro Kakigawa’s 瀧川龜太郎 *Shiji huizhu kaozheng* 史記會注考證 (Taipei shi: Tiangong shuju 1993).

¹²² Paul Goldin has discussed the anachronistic problem of the passage in more detail in his article “Steppe Nomads as a Philosophical Problem in Classical China” in *Mapping Mongolia: Situating Mongolia in the World from Geologic Time to the Present* edited by Paula L. W. Sabloff (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2011), p. 220-246.

Despite of the confusion of the genealogy of the tribes, what then follows is a stable vision of “us” and “them” in terms of territorialization of the central plain. Sima relates chronologically the Xiongnu’s war with the Chinese states since Xia.

夏道衰，而公劉失其稷官，變於西戎，邑於豳。其後三百有余歲，戎狄攻大王亶父，亶父亡走岐下，而豳人悉從亶父而邑焉，作周。其後百有余歲，周西伯昌伐畎夷氏。後十有余年，武王伐紂而營雒邑，復居於酆鄩，放逐戎夷涇、洛之北，以時入貢，命曰“荒服”。(Sima 1154)

When the power of the Xia declined, Gong Liu, the ancestor of the Zhou dynasty, having lost his position as minister of grain, went to live among the Western Rong barbarians, adopting their ways and founding a city at Bin. Some three hundred years later the Rong and Di tribes attacked Gong Liu’s descendant, the Great Lord Danfu. Danfu fled to the foot of Mount Qi and the whole population of Bin followed after him, founding a new city there. This was the beginning of the Zhou state.

A hundred and some years later Chang, the Zhou Earl of the West, attacked the Quanyishi tribe, and ten or twelve years later, his son, King Wu, overthrew emperor Zhou, the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, and founded a new capital at Lo. He also occupied the regions of Feng and Hao, drove the barbarians north beyond the Jing and Luo rivers, and obliged them to bring tribute to his court at specified times. Their lands were known as “the wild outskirts.”¹²³

That the ruler Gongliu is able to adopt the barbarians’ way after the decay of Xia gives Confucius’s saying that “if a master dwells among the nine Yi barbarians, what crudeness would there be” 君子居之，何陋之有? a twist. Confucius’s idea that all human nature is similar, barbarians can be fully acculturated, and the periphery could become the center if an educated gentleman lives there, in the narrative has the connotation that being among the barbarians can be a temporary strategy allowing Gongliu to rise again in the future. The people of Bin--a marginal place where various peoples must have mixed and mingled--are only called the “people of Bin” to differentiate them from the barbarians precisely because they follow the way of Zhou, an indication of their acculturation. Similarly, the founding of the Zhou dynasty at the marginal place Qixia does not slightly

¹²³ Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, translated from the *Shih chi of Ssu-ma Ch’ien* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 156, with modifications.

bother the narrator for its legitimacy; rather, it means further battles with the Xiongnu in order to retrieve the central plains. The momentum of the narration confirms the Sino-centric order as the final result of all historical sequential events.

On the other hand, it is far from clear to the reader to what extent the various foreign tribes described in the text, “the Western barbarians,” “Rong” and Di” tribes, “the barbarians” are related to the Chinese, aside from their wars against us. Whether these names under the rubric of Xiongnu are defined as tribes, ethnic groups, or polities is equally murky. Paul Goldin notes that the archaeological findings of the communities settled in the ancient Ordos indicate that they were linguistically, genetically, and economically distinct groups (227-228). Xiongnu--a name coined by the Chinese to signify the tribe--is not a consistent and coherent category with which to have fruitful scholarly discussions of who the Xiongnu are, even though scholars are preoccupied with the problem of race in their discussions.



Figure 3.1: Quanrong in the late-Ming illustrated edition of *Guideways* by Jiang Yingao 蔣應鎬, reprinted from *Guben Shanhaijing tushuo* 古本山海經圖說 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2007) 1053.

While modern critics are preoccupied with the idea of race, premodern commentators draw on various sources to identify and confirm the Xiongnu's dog origin. For instance, Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (c.a. 656-720 CE) explores the name Quanyi shi 猷夷氏 as such:

韋昭云，春秋以為犬戎，按猷音犬。大顏云，即昆夷也，山海經云，黃帝生苗龍苗龍生融吾，融吾生並明，並明生白犬，白犬有二牡，是為犬戎。說文云，赤狄本犬種，字從犬，又山海經云，有人而獸身，名曰犬夷，賈逵云，犬夷，戎之別種也。(Sima 1154)

Wei Zhao (204-273) says, the *Annals of Springs and Autumns* writes it as Quanrong. "Quan" is pronounced as what "dog" is pronounced. Dayan says, this is Kun barbarians. *Guideways* says, the Yellow emperor has a son named Miaolong who has a son named Rongwu. Rongwu has Binming, Binming has Baiquan (white dogs). Baiquan has two male sons, and this is Quanrong. *Shuowen* says, *Chidi* (Red barbarians) originally is a dog breed, so the radical of their name is dog. In addition, *Guideways* says, there is a people with bestial bodies, and their name is Quanyi (dog-like barbarians). Jia Kui (174-228) says, Quanyi, a branch of Rong (barbarians).

The etymologic explanation of the coining of the character 猷 with the semantic component of quan 犬--dog-- functions as truths claim for the very right to *name* barbarians. The citations from various textual and scholarly authorities such as the *Springs and Autumns*, *Guideways*, *Shuowen*, and eminent scholars such as Wei Zhao, Dayan, and Jia Kui, hinge upon a certain relation to the very idea of authority per se. The *Guideways* among the various sources of authorial forces, however, only serves to naturalize the derogatory meaning latent in the very act of naming itself as if the mythological system in the *Guideways*, as in the other authorities, is an apolitical realm and the animalism of the barbarians is a natural existence.

In *Myth Today*, Roland Barthes uses the term "signification" to elucidate how a sign's signified and signifier already are frozen and then become form. He makes an example of a young black man in a French uniform saluting to the French tricolor

national flag on the front cover of an issue of the French magazine *Paris-Match*. There are two layers of semiological systems here. In the first system of language, the image of a black man saluting to the French flag as a sign--with its image as the signifier and the meaning latent to it--is fixed and frozen as a signifier to portray a larger picture to the reader in the second system of myth. The signification of this sign is that the French empire is best served and defended by her citizens who are born equal, and no racial discrimination exists within the French empire.¹²⁴

Sima Zhen's references to the various textual authorities make these texts the "signification" of the myth of a "dog origin" of the Quayi clan. There is no dialogic negotiation between the various sources cited rather than an *affirmation* of the myth of the barbarians' bestial nature. By contrast, Sima Qian's narration of the Chinese states' battles with the various nomadic tribes indicates his desire to construct a coherent Sino-Xiongnu history, the same as his self-consciousness as a historian to claim his right to narrate history, as correspondent to his conscious construction of a genealogy of the Xiongnu as a subject. Sima Qian simply ceases the account with an anachronistic incident of General Ershi 貳師 who was dispatched to fight against Shanyu 單于 but ended up surrendering because the Han emperor had exterminated his entire family due to a scandal at court: "He [the grand physician Sui Tan] in turn gave out the news that Li Guangli's family had been exterminated and thereby caused Li Guangli to surrender to the Xiongnu 言貳師將軍家室族滅，使廣利得降匈奴" (1170). While this stop *in medias res* does not fulfill the expectations of the reader, it is Sima's own commentary that "concludes" the entire narrative. He comes down to the ancestor of all historians--

¹²⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) 116-117.

Confucius, who was believed to be the author of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and then points out that

世俗之言匈奴者，患其徼一時之權，而務以便偏指，不參彼己；將率席中國廣大，氣奮，人主因以決策，是以建功不深。(1171)

The trouble with the ordinary run of men these days who discuss Xiongnu affairs is that they seek only for some temporary advantage, resorting to any kind of flattery in order to have their own views accepted, without considering what the effect may be on all parties concerned. At the same time the generals and military leaders, relying upon the vastness and might of China, grow increasingly bold, and the ruler follows their advice in making his decisions. Thus no profound achievement is ever reached (Watson 192).

What Sima says hinges upon the political function of Chinese historiography--*ci* 刺, literally, to thrust, to goad, to criticize--a way to tell stories in history to persuade the present ruler to make wise decisions. Thus in light of Sima Qian's advocacy of making peace with the Xiongnu as evinced in the passage, it seems that his telling of the Sino-Xiongnu history since Xia seemed to highlight the advantage of mingling with the Xiongnu. After all, Gongliu adopted the way of the Western barbarians to accumulate power for the future, and Danfu established the Zhou dynasty with the help of the people at the margins of the central plain. Therefore, the very extermination of the family of general Li Guangli which causes his surrender to the Xiongnu underlies Sima Qian's point that any violence initiated either upon "us" or upon "them" would definitely worsen the antagonistic situation. His very conclusion that "the nine provinces of China" would not be as peaceful as a "truly worthy dynasty" as the ancient Xia dynasty governed by Yu without "[the ruler] selecting the right generals and ministers" 唯在擇任將相哉 (1171). In so commenting, Sima Qian again claims his very spot among historiographers and advisors in terms of presenting his opinions of the ideal state that he envisions because indeed it is opinions and advice that will ultimately influence the emperor's decisions.

I have shown that Sima Qian's narration of the Xiongnu deviates from the descriptive authority of the *Guideways* that has been drawn upon constantly by commentators like Sima Zhen as a way to reinforce the truth's claim of the Chinese's very act of naming this particular northern nomad tribe in their imagination. Individuals then can use the very form of narrations to channel their opinions for the idealized state. Sima Qian's invention of a new historiographical form, "biographical history," to narrate the Xiongnu then is significant, since as I have shown, biographies are the opposite narratives of myths and spatial descriptions.

Basing upon the *Guideways*, *Mu Tianzi zhuan* (Romance of King Mu) narrates how The split tradition of cosmological records as exemplified in the tensions and connections between the *Guideways* and the *Records of the Great Historian* is the beginning of the diverting discourses of the religious and the historical accounts. in the 16th-century Ming China when *JW* came into being.

The Beginning of the Romance of Xuanzang in History: Biographies and Miracle Tales on a Quest Journey

The literary tradition of *JW* began when Xuanzang decided to depart for India to retranslate the Yogâcâra texts from Sanskrit into classical Chinese. He sought to recover the original sense of âlaya-vijñâna that can determine whether common people can attain Buddhahood. Yet in the entire storytelling cycles about him, Xuanzang's purpose of translating the scripture was forgotten. Glen Dudbridge notes that folklore, Buddhist tradition, and mythology, are the three most important sources of the story cycles.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Glen Dudbridge, *The Hsi-yu chi: A Study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel* (Cambridge: the University Press 1970) 1.

Isobe Akira further points out that Xuanzang's biographies lay the foundation for his mythologization.¹²⁶ There are one travelogue and three near-contemporary biographies of Xuanzang: monk Bian Ji's 辯機 edition of Xuanzang's travelogue *Datang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 finished in 646 ACE, monk Mingxiang's 冥詳 *Datang gu Sanzang Xuanzang fashi xingzhuan* 大唐故三藏玄奘法師形狀 (The Account of Conduct of Demised Tripitaka Xuanzang Dharma Master) written in 664,¹²⁷ *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (Sequel to the Biographies of Eminent Monks) by Daoxuan 道宣 in 664-668, monks Huili 慧立 and Yenzong's 彦棕 *Da Ci'en si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (Biography of Tripitaka Dharma Master at the Great Imperial Favor Temple, henceforth Biography) written in 688. In addition, Emperor Taizong composed *Datang sanzang shengjiao xu* 大唐三藏聖教序 that was then inscribed on the stele of *Datang sanzang shengjiao xu bei* 大唐三藏聖教序碑 in 672.

I would especially like to locate the nascent fantasy of Tripitaka's pilgrimage in the biography of Xuanzang *Da Ci'en si Sanzang fashi zhuan*.¹²⁸ The highly descriptive biography piously portrays Xuanzang as a religious saint who has displayed extraordinary determination and perseverance in pursuing his aim of making a pilgrimage to India despite all the obstacles and dangers encountered. The biographers also incorporate summaries of his travelogue *Datang xiyu ji*, describing the journey of a

¹²⁶ Isobe Akira 磯部彰, "Saiyūki" keiseishi no kenkyū 西遊記形成史の研究 (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1993) 53.

¹²⁷ The genre of *xingzhuan* is for the purpose of recording the person's conducts in his life for submission to "the authorities as drafts for an eventual biography, or as a justification for posthumous titles, or for memorial stelae and commemorative writings composed for the use of the ancestral cult--in particular, the tomb inscription (muzhi 墓誌) which were buried with the coffin, the epitaphs (mubiao 墓表 or shentao bei 申討碑) which were engraved on stone tablets erected in front of the grave, and the sacrificial speeches (zhiwen 志文) addressed to the deceased as part of the funeral ceremonies." See Denis Twitchett's "Problems of Chinese Biography" in Arthur Wright et al. eds., *Confucian Personalities, Confucian Personalities* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962) 27.

¹²⁸ Isobe Akira has already noted the significance of the biography in terms of its contribution to the mythologization of Xuanzang's pilgrimage.

pilgrim--where he has been and what he has seen-- as the essential component of the journey of his life. Nonetheless, the narration of Xuanzang's learning experiences in India and his achievements after his return does not impress the reader as much as the tale of his near-death exhaustion in the *Mohe yanji* Gobi desert and the miracle that happened afterwards. It is from the biographee's private experience of an extreme circumstance that fantasy about Xuanzang's journey to India accrues.

In 646, before the Biography was composed, the scribe and writer (mishu zhuzuo 秘書著作) Zuolang Jingbo 佐郎敬播--one of the compilers of the *Official History of the Five Dynasties* 五代史-- wrote in the preface of *Datang xiyu ji* about how Xuanzang managed to save himself in deadly situations:

杖錫遵路。資皇靈而抵殊俗。冒重險其若夷。假冥助而踐畏塗。幾必危而已濟。¹²⁹

His traveling staff guided his way. Relying upon the spiritual force of the emperor, he reached the realm of foreign customs. He faced tremendous dangers, but only regarded them as safe as a leveled road. With the help of the divine, he set on a daunting journey. Whenever he almost could not escape from death, he managed to save himself.

In 672, to illustrate the wonder and the poetics of Xuanzang's passionate wayfaring and miraculous survival, emperor Taizong composed an epitaph to be inscribed on the stele at the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda (dayan ta 大雁塔) erected to enshrine his relic bones:

往遊西域。乘危遠邁，杖策孤征。積雪晨飛，途閑失地；驚砂夕起，空外迷天。¹³⁰

He set off to travel in the Western Region. Riding on the risks, he strode afar, alone, with his traveling staff. Aggregated snow stretching out and flying in the morning,

¹²⁹ Xuanzang 玄奘, Ji Xianlin 季羨林 ed., *Datang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 2008)1.

¹³⁰ *Quantang wen* 全唐文 (Taibei: Taiwan datong shuju, 1925) 130.

in the midst of the journey, he lost himself in the region. Startled sands rose in the dusk, the sky beyond the sky was astounded.

The poetic environment illustrates Xuanzang's heroism. But following the two major descriptions of the spectacle of Xuanzang's pilgrimage in the Western region, "Biography" then tells a story about Xuanzang's entrapments in the deserts and his miraculous survival. The story tells that after having accidentally dropped his water-bottle in the sands of the Gobi desert where

四顧茫然人鳥俱絕, 夜則妖例舉火爛若繁星。昼則驚風擁沙散如時雨。雖遇如是心無所懼。¹³¹

In four directions, the view was boundless; there were no traces either of man or horse, and in the night the demons and goblins raised fire-lights as many as the stars; in the day-time the driving wind blew the sand before it as in the season of rain. But notwithstanding all this his heart was unaffected by fear.¹³²

Remembering of his vow that if he did not succeed in reaching India he would not return to the East, Xuanzang decided to continue his journey despite the lack of water supply.

Trekking in the sands, he kept chanting the *Heart Sutra* and invoking the name of Avalokiteśvara Guanyin to protect himself. When he arrived at a place called "sand river" (shahe 沙河), thoroughly exhausted after four nights and five days without water, he laid down to rest on the sands, praying with earnest heart and without cessation to Avalokiteśvar. Thence, "a giant deity, several *chang* in height, holding in his hand a halberd used for signaling" 一大神長數丈, 執戟麾 appeared in his dream and spoke:

"Why are you still sleeping and not pressing on with all your might" 何不强行而更卧也

¹³¹ Huili 慧立 and Yan Zong 彥棕, *Da Ci'en si Sanzang fashi zhuan shijia fangzhi* 大慈恩寺三藏法師傳釋迦方誌, Zhongwai jiaotong shiji congkan 中外交通史籍叢刊 ed et al, 孫毓堂 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000) 16-17.

¹³² Beal, Samuel, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang, by the Shaman Hwui Li. With an introduction containing an account of the works of I-tsing* (London, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner 1911) 22.

(Beal 23)? Thus he roused himself from slumber and pushed forwards for ten li untill his horse suddenly led him first to several acres of green grass and then to a pool of sweet and bright water. The biographers comment that “this water and grass were not natural supplies, but undoubtedly were produced through the loving pity of Bodhisattva, and it is a proof of his extreme sincerity that stimulates the spiritual power” 计此应非旧水草。固是菩萨慈悲为生。其至诚通神皆此类也 (Beal 24).

What is featured in these biographies is an ideal pilgrim whose physical experience on the road gives rise to his experience of the divine. The more challenging and demanding the environment, the more focused the pilgrim is by avoiding any contagion from the distracting things encountered, the more likely miracle will appear to revive and transform the pilgrim. The pilgrimage and pilgrim are specifically associated with the place--not only the final destination as the center of god, but also the path towards the center as a metaphor of the pilgrim's spiritual journey of self-transformation.

What distinguishes “Biography” from the other two is a quasi-cinematic sensibility to the scene which switches the focus from an exemplary pilgrim to the otherness of geography as both demonic and saintly manifestations, inviting the reader to participate with Xuanzang to take on a vicarious journey of miracle. The story about the rising of the giant spirit invoked to protect Xuanzang, in effect, follows the typical narrative pattern of contemporary miracle tales of Guanyin. In these tales, in face of dangers of natural disasters, diseases, demons and robbers, the devotee's invoking the name of Guanyin will help him or her to obtain salvation.¹³³ These tales either function as trauma healing, will-fulfilling, or disaster pacification. They are written particularly for

¹³³ Donald E. Gjertson, “The Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tale: A Preliminary Survey,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (Jul.-Sep., 1981) 287-301.

the Chinese audience with an attempt to demonstrate to the Chinese that Buddhism, as a foreign religion, is “good” for the Chinese, so that the Chinese are willing to believe in Buddhism. For example, in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林, and *Guanyin cilin ji* 觀音慈林集, a miracle tale recounts a devotee’s resurrection after being murdered by foreign enemies.

唐武德中醴泉人。常齋戒，誦觀世音經，逾千遍。每在京城延興寺，修營功德。武德二年十一月，因事還家。逢胡賊，被殺之。當殺時，至心念觀音經，死而復生。飢寒交迫，拾得羊裘一領、鞋襪一雙，一鉢桃棗，得以免飢寒。天曉，去賊已遠，得路還家。¹³⁴

Xu Shancai, nee Miaoquan during the reign of Wude of Tang. He often observed the rituals of fasting, and chanted the Sutra of the Guan-shi-yin over thousand of times.

He donated at the Yanxing Temple of the capital. The eleventh month and the second year of the Wudei reign (619) witnessed that he was murdered during his encounter of barbarian thieves on his way home. While he was being killed, he with his utmost heart chanted Guanyin Sutra, and thus he resurrected. In hunger and cold, he chanced picked up a sheep-fur coat, a pair of shoes and socks, a jar of peaches and jujubes, so that he could be free from hunger and coldness. When it reached daybreak, he has left the thieves afar, and he found his way home.

The story is told in a linear fashion and serves to heal the trauma of the devotee who is accidentally involved in a killing when the borders of the empire are crossed. Contrasting Guanyin with foreign killers to prove the bodhisattva’s friendliness and helpfulness, the story of the miracle of resurrection and the rewards of Guanyin, the jujubes and the fur coat, subvert and compensate what has happened to the individual, leaving the ultimate cause of the story, the perilous imperial borders, unresolved, and irrelevant to the person. It is precisely these reified objects that tantalize and entice the reader to join the Guanyin cult.

Similarly, in the miracle story during Xuanzang’s pilgrimage, the space--the dangerous environment of the Gobi Desert--and the reification of the deity--his height,

¹³⁴ See section “retribution 10” in vol. 111 of *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961).

words, and halberd--intricately intertwined, creates a public spectacle of a pilgrim, inviting collective commemoration of him as a demigod.

Chinese miracle tales are connected closely to hagiography and biography. Arthur Wright pointed out that the biographer “sought to demonstrate the rewards of piety and faith, the working of Buddhism’s universal laws in the lives of eminent monks.”¹³⁵ That is, the Buddhist universal laws have the social function that binds the biographer, the subject, and the reader together through their common belief in Buddhism. Indeed, Xuanzang’s “Biography” serves to affirm Buddhism, however, Arthur Wright did not mention the agency of the subject’s charisma in influencing the reader’s reception. The spectacle of the deity and the geography in the “Biography” precisely works wonders in manifesting Xuanzang’s spiritual power. Nonetheless, this power does not necessarily convince the audience to believe in Buddhism, but draws the audience towards the pilgrimage and the pilgrim. It was particularly so in the Tang dynasty when the state bureaucracy had exclusive control of historical and religious writing, assuring that hagiographies were as realistic and objective as possible as historical writing.¹³⁶ Religious aura being controlled, the subjectivity of Xuanzang and his pilgrimage then loomed large in the public arena to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist readers. It is precisely in the very narration of the spectacular moment in “Biography”--narration that hinges upon geography and deity in an extreme situation of a miracle in a vicarious journey taken by the biographer and his implied audience--that the storytelling cycles of Tripitaka’s journey to the West emerged.

¹³⁵ Arthur F. Wright, “Biography and Hagiography: Hui-Chiao’s *Lives of Eminent Monks*,” *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbum-kagaku-kenkyusyo* (Kyoto University, 1954) 384-432.

¹³⁶ See Brian Moloughney, “From Biographical History to historical Biography: a Transformation in Chinese Historical Writing,” *East Asian history* (Fyshwick: Goanna Print, 1992) 1-29, and Denis Twitchett’s “Problems of Chinese Biography” in Wright, 24-39.

The Vocabulary of a Magic-Travel Romance: Monsters, Magic Contest, and Multi-Ethnic Empires

Whereas “Biography” imagined one’s life journey as a quest for truth for a due sense of seriousness, another important literary genre emerged before the predecessors of *Journey*. These were the transformation text: they originated in the Sichuan and Dunhuang regions. These texts began as entertainment, and then were absorbed thoroughly into the popular literary tradition at the beginning of the Song period.¹³⁷ It was during this same period that *Journey*’s performance predecessors, *shihua*, *zaju* drama, and ritual drama performances, began to emerge successively. That is to say, without the emergence of the transformation text, the literary tradition of *JW* would have been very different. In the transformation texts that tell of popular religious stories basing on Buddhist scriptures, the structure of a pilgrimage--a human subject’s quest for Buddhist truth with the magical protection from gods and spirits--takes shape, which becomes the narrative structure of *JW*’s generic ancestors.

¹³⁷ For the origin of transformation texts, see, Li Xiaorong 李小榮, *Bianwen jiangchang yu huafan zongjiao yishu* 變文講唱與華梵宗教藝術 (Shanghai: Shanghai sanlianshudian, 2002).



Figure 3.2: The painting scroll P4524 of the transformation text *Subduing Demons*, reprint.

The transformation text *Subduing the Demons* (Xiangmo bian 降魔變) (748-749), derived from the *Sutra of the Foolish and the Wise* 賢愚經 (745)¹³⁸ stages in the theological universe a Buddhist convert and minister of the ancient Indian kingdom of Srāvastī as the protagonist. Sudatta is looking to purchase the Jetavana Garden (zhiyuan 祇園) from Prince Jeta to accommodate Buddha's teaching of the *Diamond Sutra*.¹³⁹ Thus, we read that in the *Sutra of the Foolish and the Wise* that Śāriputra directly asks the prince to sell the garden to him after Sudatta's conversion to Buddhism. In *Subduing the Demons*, however, Sudatta has visited four inappropriate sites all of which are either too dirty, vile, or immoral for a Buddhist monastery before he finds the site owned by Prince Jeta. Furthermore, because of Jeta's love of the garden, Sudatta has to "trick" the prince with a lie that the garden has become inauspicious and full of anomalies so that the prince

¹³⁸ Victor Mair considers it uncertain to determine if the transformation text is derived from the sutra or not.

¹³⁹ There are more than one sutra that mentions the construction of the garden. The garden is mentioned at the beginning of the Diamond Sutra: "如是我聞，一時佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園，與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱。" See Luo Zongtao 羅宗濤's "Xianyu jing yu zhiyuan yinyou ji, xiangmo bianwen zhi bijiao yanjiu" 賢愚經與祇園因由記，降魔變文之比較研究, *Zhongguo gudian xiaoshuo yanjiu zhuanji* vol. 2 中國古典小說研究專集 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1970) 109-188.

agrees to sell the garden on the condition that the buyer cover the entire ground with gold.

By slowing down the speed of narration by rendering more detours and obstacles in the way of the protagonist's realization of his goal, *Subduing the Demons* creates more dramatic scenes and vignettes than the non-dramatic summary of the garden's attainment in *Sutra of the Foolish and the Wise*.¹⁴⁰ In this way, *Subduing the Demons* generates the quest theme at the theological center in which it is the human subject rather than Buddha who is the protagonist.

Nonetheless, the human subject assisted by the Buddhist divine power always will give way to divinity to take the center of the stage in the form of a magic contest against the heretics of epiphanic manifestations. It is naturally so because the animal transformations represent the myriad transformations of the bodhisattvas and ultimately the Buddha, their tremendous capabilities as visualized in their different bodily forms to channel the Dharma teaching to deal with a commoner or contest with their enemy. Thus, the Lion gnawing at the Buffalo implies the process of revealing the real dualistic power relationship between the two religions, and eventually such illusory contests must end with the recognition of the true identity of the two characters and final result of the competition.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ For an analysis of the rhythmic scenic descriptions vis-a-vis summary in novels, see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An essay in Method* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980) 109-112.

¹⁴¹ for metamorphosis in Western fantasy, see Metamorphosis in the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, eds. John Clute and John Grant (London: Orbit, 1997) 641-642.

Transformation texts as a visually-oriented genre are performed with a pictorial scroll.¹⁴² The storyteller would have been skillful at unfolding the long scroll of the picture in a linear and one-directional fashion, from time to time pausing at the right place and pointing at the forms and colors in space that correspond to a vocal moment of the unfolding story. Since the painted scenes should be the most pregnant and most suggestive ones to the audience, what matches the painted scenes then are the moments of spectacles in the plot, moments recapitulated in the lyrical verses recurrently popping up at the interval of the recitation in vernacular Chinese. According to the extant fragmented painting scroll P4524 (circa 9th century) of *Subduing the Demons*, at the visual center of the six pictorial scenes are the recurrent magic transformations of Śāriputra and Raudrākṣa, chief of the six heretics: a warrior destroying a mountain, a lion gnawing a buffalo, a white six-tusked elephant tramping in a pond, a gigantic golden-winged bird, Garuda, pecking a dragon, two yellow-headed demons being defeated by Vaisravana Maharaja, and wind blowing a tree. Facilitated by the moving of the scroll of the storyteller, the main action of the plot, “to transform” or “to metamorphose” (bian 變) is translated conveniently into the different auspicious animal images (therianthropy) at the visual center of each scene. These are accompanied by the foreign South-Asian-looking heretics with naked upper bodies and grotesque shapes, flanked by the same groups of Chinese-looking monks and the Chinese ruler with his attendants of Tibetans, Uighurs, Khotanese, Sogdians, Tokharians, and other peoples.¹⁴³ Thus, the painting scroll

¹⁴² Victor Mair, “Sariputra Defeats the Six Heterodox Masters: Oral-Visual Aspects of an Illustrated Transformation Scroll (P4524).” *Asia Major*, 3rd series, 8.2 (1995) p.1-52, plus three plates. Actually published in September, 1997.

¹⁴³ These various ethnic images are identified by Victor Mair as a reflection of the local population of Dunhuang.

together with the text guides the traveling eye of the audience¹⁴⁴ on a pleasurable journey to encounter the magical and the foreign, projecting a utopian illusion of a world consisting of mutually contesting but dependent cultures. It seems to mean that Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762), the implied audience of *Subduing the Demons*, like the seated Chinese ruler in Taoist attire in the picture, needs to depend upon the “heretic” Chinese monks to exorcise demons in the same way as he needs the various ethnic peoples of Dunhuang to follow him to consolidate the borders of his expansive empire. The Buddhist practitioner from an Indian kingdom then not only functions as an exemplar for the Chinese audience but also merges with the Chinese Buddhist populace in the utopian imagination.

The painting was done after Zhang Yichao 張義潮 (799–872) subdued Dunhuang in the 9th century. This utopian world of cultural diversity in which different ideologies and ethnicities can be stitched together into one narrative space is based upon the hard fact of the empire’s pacified borders. This is shown by the mural of the topoi of “subduing demons” at the Mogao cave 莫高窟 156 of Dunhuang, which delineates the

¹⁴⁴ Victor Mair proves that, based on the colophon of “The Transformation Text of Subduing Demons” (P2187) which bears the statement of the inscriber at the end of the lecture on the Vajracchedikaprajnaparamita-sutra (P2133v) in 920 and the statement of another inscriber named Yuanjung 愿俊 residing in the Pure Land Monastery in 944, the transformation texts were intended for circulation among readers. Although it is uncertain whether transformation texts were related to transformation performances by storytellers and entertainers, we know that accompanied with pictorial scrolls, transformation performances were received popularly among audiences of various social strata ranging from commoners to distinguished poets, high-ranking officials, and even emperors. See Victor Mair’s *T’ang Transformation Texts: a Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1989). The popularity of the transformation text and its images is demonstrated by Wu Daozi’s 吳道子 mural in the temple of the capital Chang’an. “In the temples, images are painted on walls. In three hundred some temples, the humans and creatures in the transformation texts are spectacular, mysterious, and bizarre. No figures are similar. ... In the Ci’en Temple, there are Manjushri and Samantabhadra, and in the western corridor, there are murals of ‘subduing demons’ and ‘swirling dragons,’ as well as the murals of Hell, Indra, Brahma, and the Dragon Spirit in the Jinggong Temple” 寺觀之中，圖書牆壁。凡三百餘間。變相人物，奇蹤異狀，無有同者。... 慈恩寺前文殊、普賢，西面廊下降魔，盤龍等壁。及景公寺地獄壁、帝釋、梵王、龍神等。永壽寺中中三門兩神，及諸道觀寺院，不可勝紀，皆妙絕一時。 See *Shuo fu* 說郛, vol. 90 in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書.

Goddess Earth Upsurging (Diyong furen 地湧夫人) as an accuser of the demonic armies symbolizing the military victory of the expulsion of the Turban rivals.¹⁴⁵

Cannibalistic Disciple, Dancing Muslims, and Evil Man: Religion and the Performative Tradition of *Journey to the West* in the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties

Fifty years after 688, a minor deity particularly associated with the geography of the Western region--Spirit of Deep Sands (shensha shen 深沙神), plausibly imported from Yuchen 于闐 to China in the reign of Tang Xuanzong--substitutes Guanyin. Whereas Guanyin along with the *Heart Sutra* which Xuanzang translated represents a state-sanctioned and institutionalized deity with ubiquitous power, Spirit of Deep Sands embodies the geography of the Western regions, and becomes a permanent character in the story cycles about Xuanzang. Named after the place, sand river, in the desert, the giant monster deity's "... head is like a crimson bowl. Two hands are like the nets of heaven and earth. From his neck hang the heads of seven demons. About his limbs are eight serpents, and two demons' heads seem to engulf his (nether-)limbs."¹⁴⁶ The Japanese pilgrim Jōgyō who visited China in 838-839 believed that Spirit of Deep Sands was a manifestation of a major Tantric god Vaiśravaṇa 毘沙門天-- the patron god of warriors, merchants, and pilgrims in the north. The Spirit of Deep Sands is dubiously marked by his "monstrosity" as symbolized by his skull necklace, his demonic appearance and his protective power.

¹⁴⁵ Zhang Shanqing 張善慶, "Zhongwan Tang wudai shiqi dunhuang xiangmobian dishen tuxiang yanjiu" 中晚唐五代時期敦煌降魔變地神圖像研究, *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 (2010: 1) 69-75, 133-134.

¹⁴⁶ *Jobodai shu* 成菩提集, p. 733b, cited from Glen, 20.



Figure 3.3 (left): Vajrabhairava with Vajravetali, Tibet, 18th century, picture taken at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 3.4 (right): Spirit of Deep Sands, reprinted from Glen.

The Spirit of Deep Sands' skull necklace, a typical ritual object found on the images of Tantric "wrathful deities" such as the Indian god Siva in his ascetic form, the Nepalese deity Kurukulla, and on the headdress of the Tibetan Destroyer of the God of Death, Yamantaka, manifests his genealogical connection with these deities in the region where Tantrism had spread. The skull crafted from a human cranium, called "kapala" in Sanskrit, was used in the ritual of esoteric Buddhism as a vehicle for blood drinking. The ritual signifies the very act of purifying the mind of "self-cherishing, doubt, and dualistic confusion."¹⁴⁷ Thus the bearers of the skull necklaces or headdresses are perceived in the tradition as awe-inspiring, heroic, and majestic.

The Esoteric Buddhist Jingang Zhi 金剛智 (671-741) has painted "the Picture of the Sixteen Good Spirits" (shiliu shanshen tu 十六善神圖) on which Xuanzang, the

¹⁴⁷ Judith Simmer-Brown's *Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism* (Boston&London: Shambhala Pub., 2001) 154-156.

believer of Mahayana sutra, is deified in tandem with the Tantric deity Spirit of Deep Sands. The very juxtaposition of Xuanzang with Spirit of Deep Sands in the 8th century indicates the increasingly important role Tantrism played in Tang China. Indian Tantric Buddhists Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei 善無畏) and Vajrabodhi (Jingang Zhi 金剛智) entered the Tang court, and Xuanzong 玄宗 was interested in asking them to perform tantric rituals such as praying for rain, preventing imminent disasters, or conducting “soul summons”--incantations, astrology, mythical trances--similar to those of the Taoist rituals to consolidate Xuanzong’s rulership.¹⁴⁸ Whereas Tantric monks continuously entered China, on the verge of the Anshi Rebellion (an shi zhiluan 安史之亂), however, Tibet was exerting pressure in the Central Asia, gradually controlling southern Tarim and was competing with Uyghurs for eastern Xinjiang and Gansu.¹⁴⁹

The skulls’ religious significance in Tantrism transforms into a major signifier of cannibalism in the first storytelling cycle about Xuanzang in the 13th-century *shihua* text *Datang sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話 (the story, with poems, of how Tripitaka of the Great Tang acquires the sutras, hereafter *TGTAS*).¹⁵⁰ “The Master had attempted twice to fetch sutras from the Western Paradise. But because your Buddhist cultivation was not complete, you had often been subject to the suffering caused by the

¹⁴⁸ For archeological evidence of the rise of Esoteric Buddhism in the 8th century, see Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: the realignment of Sino-Indian relations, 600-1400* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004) 206-207. Also Weinstein 55.

¹⁴⁹ Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: a History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹⁵⁰ There are two extant versions on the fiction. One is printed with small characters, titled *Datang sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話 divided into three volumes, with seventeen sections. The first section in the first volume, and the ending of the seventh section and the first half of the eighth section of the second volume are missing. The other one printed with big characters is titled *Xindiao datang sanzang fashi qujing ji* 新雕大唐三藏法師取經記. It has three volumes, with the first volume missing the first three sections, the third volume completely missing. For a more general discussion of the Deep Sand’s necklace, see Kang Baocheng 康保成, “Sha heshang de kulou xianglian: cong toulu chongbai dao mizong yishi” 沙和尚的骷髏項鍊：從頭顱崇拜到密宗儀式, *Henan daxue xuebao* 河南大學學報 (Zhengzhou: Henan daxue, 2004) vol. 44. 75-78.

Spirit of Deep Sands who had taken your lives” 師曾兩廻往西天取經，為佛法未全，常被深沙神作孽，損害性命。¹⁵¹ The cannibalism of the Spirit of Deep Sands as symbolized by the skulls and skeletons around his neck signified the crude and primitive environment of the path to the West, a geographical zone through which the pilgrims had to pass to reach the mecca of Buddhism, India. Thus, the idea of cannibalism represents the antagonism between the human subject and Nature since the fear of being eaten is a natural and predominant way of showing the dangers of traveling and navigating the world.

Surprisingly after being scolded that he is the most ignorant being for committing such crime of cannibalism, the Deep Sands's cannibalistic monstrosity smoothly transformed into his protection for Xuanzang. His swift convertibility corresponds to a conversation in the Chan Buddhism account *Chuandeng lu* 傳燈錄 (Account of Transferring Lanterns) between the Korean Buddhist master Lingjue 靈覺 in Hangzhou and his disciple. He asks, "... even though gold dust is expensive, what to do when it cannot cling to the eyeballs?" The master then answers, "since it does not cling, why do you make it cling?" After the disciple makes the ritual bow, the master then says, "Spirit of Deep Sands" (問: "金屑雖貴眼裡著不得時如何?" 師曰: "著不得還著得麼。" 僧禮拜。師曰: "深沙神。"). Here, the entire question of the disciple is supposed to come across as a non sequitur. The disciple's ignorance of raising a bad question, however, is dispelled by the master's alerting scold. His sudden awakening from an earlier state of stupidity resembles the image of the Spirit of Deep Sands.

¹⁵¹ Li Shiren 李時人, Cai Jinghao 蔡鏡浩 ed. *Dang Tang Sanzang qujing shihua jiaozhu* 大唐三藏取經詩話校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997).

Thus, it is not coincident that even though *TGTAS* inevitably has to portray Tripitaka's pilgrimage to the Buddhist world as a productive way of disseminating Buddhism in China, the narrative emphasizes that enlightenment only can be acquired naturally by intelligent individuals. We read that the Dharma teacher in India admonishes Tripitaka, "In my Fortune Immortal Temple, without thousands of years, and tens of thousands of generations, we have never heard of the Dharma of Buddha. Where is the Dharma? Where is Buddha? You are an obsessive man" (我福仙寺中，數千餘年，經歷萬代，佛法未聞。你道求請佛法，法在何處，佛在何方？你是癡人) (39). The very effort of reaching out and seeking a copy of *Heart Sutra* in the West does not account for a better chance of saving the common people from samsara back in China. Like the disciple of the Chan Master in *Chuandeng lu*, the idea of traveling to India may be a non sequitur as well.

If the notion of the futility of taking up a quest journey renounces a certain desire, a desire that always has been despised in Buddhism of the pilgrim to procure truth from the faraway center of the Buddhist world through real travel, then the narration seems to mean it depends upon the enlightened reader to acquire knowledge. When asked why the *Heart Sutra* should not be distributed easily to common people, the Dingguang 定光 Buddha warns Tripitaka, "Upon open, the sutra shines and twinkles. Ghosts wail and gods howl, wind and waves will cease, and the sun and the moon will not glow. How to transmit [a book as such]? (此經纔開，豪光閃爍，鬼哭神號，風波自息，日月不光，如何傳度？) (44). What is implied seems to be that a true reading is a solitary spiritual experience that cannot be imitated by people of limited vision. The Buddhist center is not a geographical location, nor a location where scriptures are amply

disseminated amply. The center is connected with the enlightened reader's spirit and mind. It means that there are potentially multiple centers in the Buddhist universe, or there might not be any center in the universe after all.

The multiple Buddhist centers or the de-centered cosmos correspond to the multiple cultural centers or a de-centered cultural pastiche in *TGTAS*. It is represented in the magic-travel romance that simultaneously assigns images of women to the countries in the West (the Pool of Queen Mother of the West, the Country of Women, and the Country of the Mother of Demons)¹⁵² and images of grotesqueness and horror to the landscape of deserts, fire pits, and heavens: the Crystal Palace of the Mahābrahmā Devarāja dwelling in the region of Form (Rūpadhātu) of Heaven, the Fragrant Mountain,¹⁵³ the Country of Utpala 優鉢羅國,¹⁵⁴ The Country of Aloe Woods,¹⁵⁵ and the Chicken-Foot Mountain of Magadha kingdom (mojietuo guo 摩揭陀國).¹⁵⁶

Tian Xiaofei has analyzed how Buddhist concept of viewing, “visualization” or “imagination” (xiang 想) through the meditative mind in early medieval China, had a fundamental impact on Chinese epistemology and depictions of the world in later times. She points out that the Buddhist rhetoric schemata of seeing the world can be roughly

¹⁵² The kaleidoscope representation of the West follows the The Country of the Mother of Demons (Guizimu 鬼子母) (located in the Gandhāra kingdom (jiantuoluo guo 健駄邏國) where Tathāgata in the legend has converted the goddess Hārītī so that she should no longer harm men), the Land of Women and the dwelling of Queen Mother of the West (the famed places in the West frequently mentioned since *Guideways*), are all selected for their relation with gender.

¹⁵³ The highest mountain of Jambūdvīpa, where Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī used to live.

¹⁵⁴ The name uses the image of blue lotus flowers prevalent in the Pure Land paradise as described in *Aparimitāyus Sūtra* 佛說無量壽經 to create a place.

¹⁵⁵ The name uses the indigenous trees of South Asia and Southeast Asia to create an imaginary fragrant place.

¹⁵⁶ Mahākāśyapa (Jiaye zunzhe 迦葉尊者) is the foremost of the Buddha's disciples who entered Nirvana--in the Western Heaven (xitian 西天).

divided into a way of seeing various layers of history at a site and a way of treating “a faraway place” as either heaven or hell rather than somewhere in between.¹⁵⁷ Similar narrative paradigms are still valid in *TGTAS* where the West is mostly a pastiche of countries recorded in historical and contemporary accounts, and the landscape is made of pristine paradises and grotesque hellish geography. But whereas Tian Xiaofei has not clarified to which center the “faraway places” are positioned as a periphery, in *TGTAS*, at least, the paradise-and-hell West is simultaneously the remote periphery in the schemata of the narrator’s “visualization.” The center of Buddhism compared to China, and paradoxically, the Chan Buddhist ideology of the narration suggests that the West is neither the center nor the periphery of the world.



Figure 3.5: Mural of Tripitaka’s journey to the West, Anxi Yulin grottoes, reprinted from Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 1997.

¹⁵⁷ Tian Xiaofei, *Visionary Journey: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2011) 19.

TGTAS was likely written after the mural on Xuanzang's procuring of sutra at the Yulin 榆林 cave of Dunhuang was made after Li Yuanhao 李元昊 of Tangut Xixia 西夏 occupied Guazhou 瓜洲 and Shazhou 沙洲 in 1036.¹⁵⁸ The strongly Buddhist state not only obstructed Qocho--the capital of Uyghur-- communication with Song, Khitan Liao, and Jurchen Jin, but they did not send any envoy to Song until the treaty between Song and Liao was concluded in 1044. Yet in establishing its own national identity through promulgation of a native script Tangut and requesting volumes of Tripitaka from the Song court and translating them into Tangut, Xixia intends to claim similar cultural and religious legacy and power from China.¹⁵⁹ The Yulin mural on Tripitaka's journey to encounter Samantabhadra depicts Tripitaka as a non-Han monk with deep-set eyes and a high nose, manifesting the possibility that China is not the only center where the story of Xuanzang's journey is circulated, in the same way as China is not the center of Buddhist teaching (Figure 3.5).

Thus I argue that Deep Sands's dubious identity in *TGTAS*--as both an unenlightened cannibal and a potential of an awakened mind after his submission to the Chan master-- is connected intimately to the Song Chinese's simultaneous fears of and curiosities over the Western region as a more authentic center of Buddhism and a daunting mandatory passage to South Asia and Middle East for pilgrims and merchants alike.

On the other hand, what parallels the 12th-century image of Deep Sands is the more subservient, exotic, and benignly magical image of *kunlun nu* 崑崙奴 (Slaves of

¹⁵⁸ See *Zhongguo shiku: Anxi yulin ku* 中國石窟: 安西榆林窟 edited by Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 敦煌研究院 (Beijing, Tokyo: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997) 160-162.

¹⁵⁹ See "Buddhism in Eleventh-Century Xia" in Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press 1996) 44.

Kunlun) to whom Deep Sands is intricately related. In the Chan Buddhist canon *Wudeng huiyuan* 五燈會元 (1252), a poem about a Chan master named Dawei Haiping 大沩海評 at the Tanzhou 潭州 of Hunan compares him to the “wrathful” (nufa 怒發) Deep Sands and the “angry” (shengchen 生瞋) *kunlun nu*.¹⁶⁰ The term *kunlun* that originally designates the Kunlun mountain where Queen Mother of the West dwells in *Guideways*, had been particularly used to describe particularly peoples with dark skin from south Pacific (places south to Vietnam) in the Tang dynasty. The Buddhist lexicographer Huilin 惠琳 has detailed that the *kunlun* peoples are islanders proficient in swimming. These include Cambodian khmers, East African *zanj* 僧祇, *turmi* 突彌, and *kurdang* 骨堂. These “base peoples” love to “feed on humans for food, as if they were some sort of *rakshas* or a kind of evil ghost.”¹⁶¹ Huilin’s comparison of the *kunlun* to cannibalistic *rakshas* or evil ghosts marks the approximate equivalence between Deep Sands and Kunlun since Deep Sands is viewed as an evil ghost and as a water deity. With his superhuman magic, a *kunlun* is depicted in the Tang tales as either a magical servant whose death caused by his master’s irrational order makes up a parable of the master’s silliness, or an intelligent superman in a Tang chuanqi romance who can help his master to decipher the mime of a beautiful courtesan, kill the ferocious dog at the gate of the courtesan house, and carry his master and his lover all the way eloping beyond the mountains, flying high above the walls as if “with wings and as rapid as an eagle” 譬若翹翎，疾同鷹隼.

¹⁶⁰ Liang Jingwen 梁靜文, “Tangdai kunlun nu lai yuan chuyi” 唐代崑崙奴來源芻議, *Haijiao shi yanjiu* 海交史研究 (2004: 2) 58-62.

¹⁶¹ Huilin 惠琳, *Yiqie jingyin yi* 一切經音義 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 168-169. Translation adapted from Julie Wilensky, “The Magical Kunlun and ‘Devil Slaves’: Chinese Perceptions of Dark-skinned people and Africa before 1500,” *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 122, July, 2002.



Figure 3.6: a black-skinned servant, a mural at Anxi Yulin grottoes, reprinted from Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 1997.

Figure 3.7: a yaksha in the water, a mural at Anxi yulin grottoes, reprinted from Dunhuang yanjiu yuan 1997.

While Deep Sands is a convertible cannibal and an enlightened goof paralleling the superhuman *kunlun* slaves, this time period also witnessed the “Bronze-headed, iron-browed” Monkey Novice emerging in the story cycles about Xuanzang’s pilgrimage. Monkey, a versatile simian creature closest to human form, no longer played the role of the ultimate “Other” but functioned as a protective helper of Tripitaka in *TGTAS* to counterbalance Deep Sands.

As early as the Han dynasty, the image of monkey embodies the “other” in the Chengdu basin in Sichuan, on the brim of the Western region. A white ape, named Jiaguo 狻猊, Mahua 馬化, or Jue 獬, was carved into the stone sarcophagi and cave tomb in the

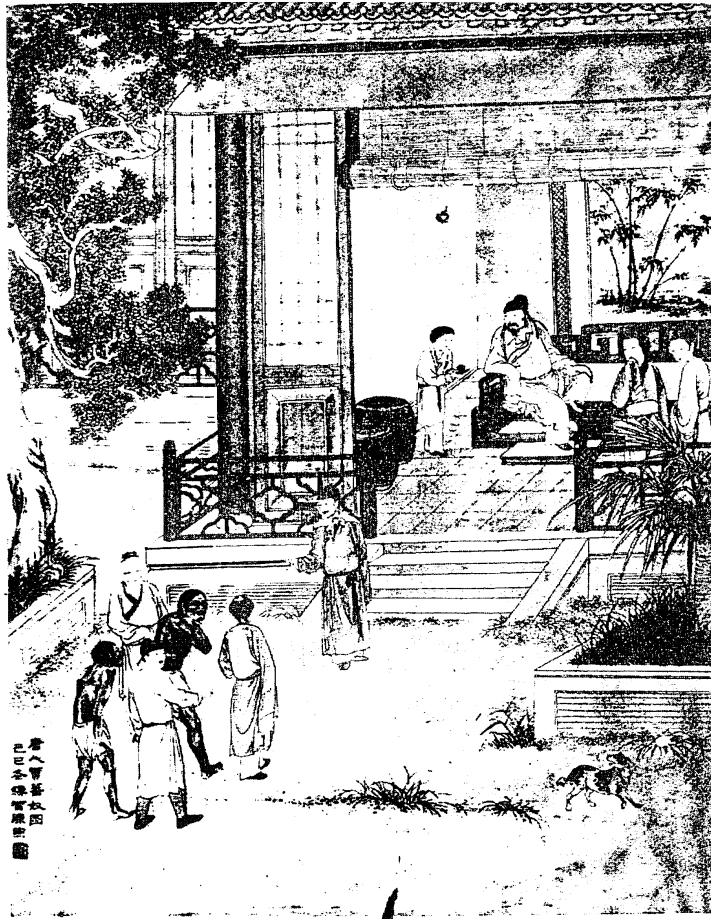


Figure 3.8: “Tao Xian purchasing Mo He,” ink sketch by Chen Xu, reprinted from Wilensky 2002.

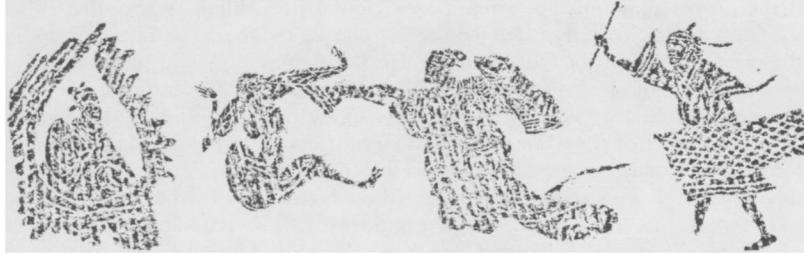


Figure 3.9 (left): Exorcising the monkey, reprinted from Wu Hung 1987.



Figure 3.10 (right): The Monkey-Headed Disciple, Kaiyuan Temple, Quanzhou, reprinted from Walker 1997.

women and was defeated by the archer Yang Youji 楊有基 and his dog.¹⁶² Wu Hung treats this pictorial story as a ritual metaphor in delivering the meaning of “harmful ghosts, spirits, and animals” the soul might encounter “on his journey to the immortal paradise” (Wu 99). The monkeys on the bas-relief embody evil and diseases, while the dogs have particular supernatural power to overcome demonic forces. The semantic association between *yu* 禺 (monkey) and *gui* 鬼 (ghost) further confirms monkeys’ categorization with ghosts. Anthropologists Eberhard and Eiichiro, on the other hand, point out the story’s connection with the Tibetan myths about their monkey ancestor.¹⁶³ In the Chinese sources, however, the ambiguous definitions of the names *Jiaguo*, *Mahua*, and *Jue* do not inform us as to what these creatures really are. For instance, *Shuowen* 說文 describes *Jue* as a female monkey, but *Er’ya* 爾雅 defines that a male *Jue* is skillful at plundering humans. *Lushi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 further confuses the reader by stating that

“a dog resemble a *jue*, and a *jue* resembles a female monkey, and a female monkey

¹⁶² Wu Hung, “The Earliest Pictorial Representation of Ape Tales,” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 73, Livr. 1/3 (1987), p. 86-112.

¹⁶³ Ishida Eiichiro, “The Kappa Legend,” *Folklore Studies* (Peking), 9: 1950. p. 1-152.

resembles a man” 狗似獾，獾似母猴，母猴似人. The function of “resemble,” *si* 似, is only to make the reader understand approximately and roughly what a *jue* is *like* but not what it really is.

What further underlies the Chinese trope of monkeys as the “other” seems obviously the fear of cross-breeding between men and animals and the disdain of the contaminated and degenerated people living with the beasts on the borders of China. Gan Bao’s 干寶 textual narrative in his *Soushen ji* 搜神記 (Records of Spirits, c. 340) tells that the women abducted by the ape who do not produce a son will be degenerated into beasts living with the monster, but the women who produce sons for the beast will return with their men-like babies to the human world and have them reared by men. These cross-breed babies are all surnamed Yang, a huge population in the southwest of Sichuan. The narrative paradigm of “either.. or...” as both negative consequences with cross-breeding only naturalizes the overall denigration of the narrator.



Figure 3.11: “Searching the Mountains 1” reprinted from Wu Hung 1987.



Figure 3.12: “Searching the Mountains 2” reprinted from Wu Hung, 1987.

The same trope of fear of cross-breeding was repeated in the later stories about the simian abductor of women,¹⁶⁴ and more importantly, in the Song-Yuan-Ming paintings on the topoi of deity Er-lang's 二郎 searching of mountain demons.¹⁶⁵ *The Picture of Searching the Mountain* (soushan tu 搜山圖) depicts semi-nude women with simian hands and carrying ape babies (fig. 3.11; 3.12). In these paintings and stories, monkeys assume a relatively stereotypical image in the quelling-demon trope. It is in contrast to the more provocative and exotic images of “others” such as Deep Sands and kunlun who were newly imported from the Western region and Southeast Asia due to the spread of Esoteric Buddhism and the expansion of maritime trade. Since the Han, the familiar image of the monkey had become cliché and thus lost its emotional and cognitive thrust to the Chinese audience.

While monkey's menace to “us” receded along with his capture and surrender in the topoi through time, another aspect of the monkey as a novice and a helper of a religious master emerged and persisted. There was a dramatic resemblance between Monkey Sun Wukong in *JW* and Hanuman in Valmiki's *Ramayana*; they shared unruly experiences in their youth, an aptness for shapeshifting and cloud-soaring, and their common role as a councilor. These commonalities have led scholars to speculate on *Ramayana*'s transmission into China via the Silk Road and the seas, possibly transmitted from Gujarat and South India into Java, Sumatra, Malaya, to Southern China, by land from Punjab and Kashmir into East Turkestan, Tibet, and China, and/or from Bengal into

¹⁶⁴ such as the Tang chuanqi tale “Bujiang zong baiyuan zhuan” 補江總白猿傳 and the Ming tale “Chen Xunjian Meiling shiqi ji” 陳巡檢梅嶺失妻記.

¹⁶⁵ Along with the popularity of the cult of Er-lang 二郎 when the later Shu emperor Meng Chang overtook the kingdom in Sichuan and adopted the cult to spread it around the country. Erlang was a hunting deity worshiped by the Qiang 羌 people for his control over mountain ghosts and his similar archery identity with Yang Youji and Yi then consolidated his opposition with monkeys.

Burma, Thailand and Laos (Ramanujan 22). A Sogdian monk Senghui's translation of *Sat-paramita-samgraha-sutra* in 251 ACE that contains a miniature version of Ramayana. The 13th-14th century Laotian *Gvay Dvorabhi*'s resemblance to *Journey*, as well as the Tibetan and Khotanese manuscripts of *Ramayana* at Dunhuang all contribute to such scholarly speculations.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the 13th-century monkey-headed guardian found in Quanzhou 泉州 of Fujian whose ear rings, tight-fillet, long hair, elongated mouth, decorations on forearm and upper arm particularly resembles Andira the simian guardian of Avalokitesvara was popular in Southeast Asia.¹⁶⁷

Besides *TGTAS*, another important dramatic antecedent of *JW* deserves our attention. In the late Yuan early Ming *zaju* drama, *Yang Donglai xiansheng piping Xiyou ji* 楊東來先生批評西遊記, generally known as *Xiyou ji zaju* 西遊記雜劇 (The Journey to the West, in the dramatic form of *zaju*, hereafter *JWZJ*) composed by Yang Jingxian 楊景先 of Mongol ethnicity, Deep Sands is identified as "Muslim heli Sha" (huihui ren heli sha 回回人河里沙).¹⁶⁸ The term *huihui* 回回 is a semantic abbreviation of Uygur (huihu 回鶻) that was originally used by the Khitans to designate the Uygur people from the west of the Cong Mountains 蔥嶺,¹⁶⁹ and it began to be popular in Yuan dynasty to signify Muslims in China. The idea of Chinese Muslim communities in China emerged. This is one of the results of Mongol conquests--the migration and settlement of Muslims

¹⁶⁶ For further information, see Hera S. Walker, "Indigenous or Foreign? A Look at the Origins of the Monkey Hero Sun Wukong," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 1998: no. 81. 1-110.

¹⁶⁷ Victor Mair, "Suen Wu-kung=Hanumat? The Progress of a Scholarly Debate," *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology*. Section on Literature (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989) 659-752.

¹⁶⁸ Xu Zheng 徐征, ed. *Quan yuanqu* 全元曲 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998) vol. 7, 5284.

¹⁶⁹ Yang Zhijiu 楊志玖, "Huihui yici de qiyuan he yanbian" 回回一詞的起源和演變, *Huizu yanjiu* 回族研究 (1992:4) 5-14. Xue Wenbo 薛文波 "Huihui xingshi kao I" 回回姓氏考(一), *Ningxia daxue xuebao* 寧夏大學學報 (1980:4).

from Central and West Asia to China--and their assimilation to the *semu* 色目 cast as administrators and merchants to rule the Han Chinese.¹⁷⁰ Thus because of the great mixture of the Islamic peoples, there was no single common language shared among the *huihui* who might speak various Turkic languages and who actually might be Jews and Uyghurs (Dillon 25). It is thus unclear to us which type of Muslim Deep Sands really is. His surname Sha 沙 (sand), however, which transliterates as a major Islamic surname Shah (meaning the king in Persian) seems to imply his Persian origin.

Why is Deep Sands described in *JWZJ* as a cannibalistic Muslim who can so easily convert to Buddhism and partake in a Buddhist pilgrimage? Monkey does not recognize him as a Muslim till he tells Monkey of his surname Sha which then leads Monkey to observe some facial traits of Deep Sands that correlate to his Muslim ethnicity.

行者云：我認得你，你是回回人河里沙。

沙和尚云：你怎麼知道？

行者云：你嘴臉有些相似。(Xu 5690)

Novice says: "I know you. You are Muslim Sha in the River."

Sand Monk says: "How do you know?"

Novice says: "Your face looks somewhat similar (to a Muslim's)."

Monkey Novice's identification through Sand Monk's physical traits rather than his language and clothing seems to project a sense of racism rising out of early Ming Emperor Taizu's 太祖 banning of Muslim and Mongol surnames, hairstyles, garments, and languages.¹⁷¹ The Mongol author might be sensitive particularly to the issue because he changed his Mongol surname to the Chinese surname Yang 楊.

¹⁷⁰ Michael Dillon, *China's Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement, and Sects* (Surrey: Curzon press, 1999)11-26.

¹⁷¹ Zheng Xiao 鄭曉, *Wuxue bian* 吾學編 Vol. 1. (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1973).

As Michael Dillon has pointed out, it is hard to pin down what acculturation really meant in early Ming. Assimilation varies region by region. In the northwest, Muslims' self-identity still remained intact, whereas Muslims in the Jiangnan region were fully assimilated (31). It is more complicated since the author Yang Jingxian is a Sinicized Mongol who writes the play in beautiful lyrical Chinese, well-versed in Buddhism, Confucian culture, poetry, and drama. Whereas his subdued Mongol ethnicity might have been projected onto Sand Monk, it is hard to say how he conceptualizes himself as a Sinicized Mongol vis-a-vis his more prestigious Mongol ancestors in the Yuan. If there is ever a racial consciousness, it is not Sand Monk's sullen and cannibalistic monstrosity since this might very well be derived from the convention of the story cycles of "Tripitaka's journey to the West." But if we contextualize Sand Monk in the zaju drama in the form of *dutuo ju* 度脫劇 (drama of salvation) and other dramas that involve Islamic characters, we find Sand Monk's obscurity--his stasis in character development troubling.

In Yuan zaju drama, the rule is that only the heroine (dan 旦) and the hero (sheng 生) sing on stage. In *JWZJ* it is the heroine who assumes the major role singing through the entire play by enacting in each act a different female character, i.e., Guanyin, Xuanzang's mother, the abducted girl, the clownish village girl, Patimokkha, and the Ghost Mother Demon, the Queen of the Country of Women, the Princess of Iron Fan, and the Poor Woman. And Monkey and Piggy play the roles of "buffoon" character type, called jing 淨 or chou 丑.¹⁷² Thus the audience will find themselves watching the heroine at the center of the stage creating two split types of women from two worlds--the world

¹⁷²Isobe Arika, "孫悟空像の形成とその發展" in "*Saiyūki*" *keiseishi no kenkyū* 西遊記形成史の研究 (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1993) 223.

of miserable and mundane women and female demons who need to be saved, and the world of goddesses who come to enlighten the monsters, the pilgrims, or salve the women. The consequence is that the major characters of the play--Tripitaka and his disciples--are marginalized on stage, since they are not allowed to sing (Glen 81). Thus because of the heroine's singing, heterosexual desire looms large in the imaginative world of the stage. It is this desire articulated from the perspective of the female victim or the female demon that drives the action of the play. The result is that Tripitaka is shown as an abandoned orphan who is longed for by his mother; and Monkey and Piggy are both demons who like to seduce and abduct women.

Yet a meta-narrative voice that comments on Islamic dancing frames the desire-driven plot. In Act Six, a village girl playing the role of a clown, an outsider, to describe the festivities celebrated at Tripitaka's departure ceremony. On stage, there might have been miscellaneous activities such as summersaults, puppet shows, *banggan* 棒桿, and stilt walkers (Yang 5263). In her words, the Muslims who dance on stilts and in masquerade are integrated into the entire scene of farcicality and buffoonery which are crowded, festive, funny, noisy, ridiculous, and mysterious.

一個漢木雕成兩個腿。見幾個回回，舞著面旌旗，阿刺刺口里不知道甚的，妝着鬼，人多我看不仔細。(5688)

One piece of Han Chinese wood is carved into two legs. I saw several Muslims, dancing and waving military flags. Blablabla, I couldn't understand what they were talking about.

They wore ghostly costumes and makeups. It was too crowded to see clearly. There is a sense of cultural alienation between the supposedly Han Chinese village girl and the *huihui* communities.

The Muslims in the Yuan drama *Romance of Moon Pavilion* (Baiyue ting 拜月亭 or Yueting ji 月亭記), one of the four great tragedies in the Yuan that stages a romance in the history of Mongol invasion of Jurchen Jin represents the Jurchen state to whom the Southern Song had to shamefully submit tribute because of their identity as the subject of the barbarian state. This represents the inverted heterosexual relationship between the heroine and her lover. The Muslims in Wu Changling's 吳昌齡 *Tripitaka Going to the Western Paradise to Fetch Sutras* (Tang Sanzang xitian qujing 唐三藏西天取經) are characters who Tripitaka encounter in the "Country of Muslims" (huihui guo 回回國); these characters represent the people in the Western regions showing explicit admiration of Buddhism, telling Tripitaka details of the routes leading to the West, a Sino-centric gesture. These Muslim boys tell jokes and act jocularly, and at the interval of their conversations, they speak a mixture of Chinese transliterations of Sanskrit and Islam that are non-sensical to the Chinese to make the audience laugh: "Nanwu seng jiaye, nanwu damoye, nanwu dalamoye, side'er, side'er, senke de'er, bicha libi bali wude nonghong, pojia mituofo, emituofo" 南無僧迦耶, 南無達摩耶, 南無塔喇摩耶。廝得兒, 廝得兒, 僧可得兒, 嚙喳力必巴力烏得弄哄, 婆迦密陀佛, 阿彌陀佛. Then they sing a song that humorously jokes about Islamic fasting and the Muslims' exotic appearance: "Muslims, Muslims are fasting. They are so so hungry that they scream for "grandma." Their eyes are sunken; their noses are piling up." 回回, 回回把清齋, 餓得, 餓得叫奶奶。眼睛, 眼睛窩進去, 鼻子堆出來。 The words "piling," "sunken," and "screaming for grandma" all are denigrative terms for Muslims to point out their deformed faces as opposed to the "normal" faces of the Chinese, and their farcical self-mutilating custom of fasting. Here mocking is disguised in the rhetorical strategy of vulgarizing Muslims'

religious customs, denigrating them as “sunzi” 孫子, literally, grandsons, a word of insult. Similarly, the Muslims in *JWZJ* are a phantom-like crowd whose faces are masked and language indistinctive. Even though the girl’s words are realistic manifestation of the Muslim culture’s integration of local festivities and dramatic performances, her description only naturalizes a denigration of Muslims, since the Muslims remain an indistinctive crowd.¹⁷³



Figure 3.13: Muslim Dancing on tilts with masks, the Tan ritual drama of Guichi.

The Muslims’ obscure image might be owing to their alienation in the beginning of the Ming when the laws mandate that Muslims should not intermarry each other but must marry Chinese. Muslims were only allowed to marry Muslims as long as no Chinese would marry them. The racial prejudice against Muslims made it so that no Chinese really wanted to marry a Muslim, considering them “vilest among the *semu* people,” and thus the Islamic communities represent a stubborn and repellant group from whom the majority of the Chinese population became more and more alienated.

¹⁷³ “The dancing Muslims” in the tan drama 傩戲 of Guichi 貴池 are images that combine both people from the Western regions and from the South Sea. See Zhong Han 鐘玲, “Tazhe shijiao xia de huihui xingxiang” 他者視角下的回回形象, *Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan bao* 中國社會科學院報. 2009.

Yet the narrator of *JWZJ* might have been sympathetic to Muslims even though the Islamic images might have corresponded to the generic convention of zaju drama. Since historically in the Yuan, the Song loyalists and anti-Mongol polemicists considered the Muslims to be a gang of uncivilized, immoral savages. They were immoral, indecent, and stinky. Their noses were like elephant's, eyes like cat's, and they were like monkeys lacking any sense of belonging, loyalty, and faithfulness. For the Mongol rulers, the Muslims were also not absolutely pleasing. Muslims were sly, and their religion offensive to the Mongols. Qubilai forbade Muslims to slaughter animals in the Muslim fashion, and circumcision and the taxation of religious institutions and teachers were contentious issues. In early Ming, the case could only be worse since Emperor Taizu was trying to eliminate the *semu* cast in order to restore a Han-Chinese priority.

In *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama*, Jonathan Burton argues that the absence of Christian men converted to Muslim--a major concern in travelers' accounts--in the English theater signifies the theater's "fantastic recuperation" of endangered "English masculinity" through the rhetoric strategy of staging heterosexual desire between Muslims and Christians.¹⁷⁴ The issue of conversion so central to Christianity and to English traveling and dramatic narratives does not seem to show up in the Chinese context. It is because, firstly, the racial and religious identity of the Mongol author seems vague; he does not seem to cling to his Mongol ethnicity and his own religion vis-a-vis Confucianism and Buddhism. Secondly, because of the author's flexible self-identity and his acculturation to Confucianism and Buddhism, his dramatic narrative of *JWZJ* follows the convention of "the drama of salvation" where ethnicity has no place

¹⁷⁴ Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama 1579-1624* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005) 93.

in the Buddhist discussion of emptiness and illusion.¹⁷⁵ Sand Monk and Muslim dancers in the *dutuo ju* then might well *supplement* the mundane life, delivering a sense of humor to the audience--since it might well be the case that Muslims were a target of joke in the early Ming. Thus, even though Yang Jingxian portrayed Muslims as alienated, silenced, and marginal, nevertheless, he showed sympathy to them, expressing a vague sense of identity with the Muslims as his memory of his Mongol ancestors still lingered. Thus, the Islamic culture, food, language, and customs, all the apolitical cultural elements remained without making the Muslims the enemy of the main characters. Further, the Yuan dynasty witnessed the popularity of Muslim music and Muslim participation in the theater, as demonstrated in the Muslims' singing of the "Muslim melody" (*huihui qu* 回回曲) in "Journey to the West to fetch sutras" (*xitian qujing* 西天取經). Other Islamic music such as "kangli" 伧里, "Mahei modangdang" 馬黑某當當, "Qingquan dangdang" 清泉當當¹⁷⁶ also were programmed into the drama. Apoliticalness was the precondition for the Muslims to remain in the Ming drama.

In the 16th century, Ming China witnessed Buddhism's complete secularization and Sinicization. Its integration with Confucianism and Taoism gave rise to the so-called syncretic religious phenomenon-- the Unity of the Three Teachings (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一). No one really wanted to set out on a real pilgrimage to India anymore. Chinese

¹⁷⁵ But this heroine eventually transforms into an enlightener and interlocutrix by enacting as a poor woman selling "barbarian pastry" (*hubing* 胡餅, a flour cake with sesames) to Tripitaka and his disciples. The pastry, snacks in Chinese *dianxin* 點心 (enlightening the mind) then alludes to the issue of the mind. She tests Tripitaka on the essence of mind by misguiding him through stating that "the mind is the root of a person" (心乃人之根本). Tripitaka corrects her, saying that mind is only a medium through which to contemplate the emptiness of self and hence ultimately, the mind is empty. For more detailed close reading of the issue of Chan Buddhism in *JWZJ*, see Liu, Chiung-yun Evelyn's *Scriptures and Bodies: Jest and Meaning in Xiyou ji*, Ph.D dissertation (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University) 2008.

¹⁷⁶ Gu Shiqun 顧世群, "Yuan zaju zhong de huihui zuojia, yanyuan, xiqu, jiqi minzu xing 元雜劇中的回回作家, 演員, 戲曲, 及其民族性," *Xibei dier minzu xueyuan xuebao* 西北第二民族學院學報.

pilgrim's travelogue such as Tripitaka's *Western World* was rare. World travelogues such as *Daoyi zhilue* 島夷志略 and *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽 were written with the preoccupation of international trade and political ambitions. A result was the dissolution and abstraction of exotic and "otherly" elements in Buddhist-related stories, teachings, and Buddhist ritualistic and dramatic performances.

Thus 16th-century China witnessed a continuous popularity of the ritual drama *Mulian* [Maudgalyayana] *Rescues His Mother* (Mulian jiumu 目連救母) (hereafter *MRHM*), a play that began to flourish as early as in the 12th century, based upon the transformation text "Damu Qianlian rescues his mother in the Hades" (Damu qianlian mingjian jiumu bianwen 大目乾連冥間救母變文) (hereafter *DQRHMH*) composed in 921AD. While *DQRHMH* does not entail the story of Xuanzang's journeying to the heavenly and hellish eerie realms as featured in *TGTAS*, *DQRHMH* nonetheless depicts the moral paragon's spiritual journey throughout the Hades to seek for his mother's salvation. Moreover, these two texts of the same genre are both about the fusion of filial piety and Buddhist piety that further dignifies the quest mission in the theological universe.

The 16th-century Ming China also witnessed the grafting of two types of literary quest- journeys-- the external journey to the western paradise and the internal journey of searching through infernal Hell. This is mainly due to the so-called *pingtai xi* 平臺戲 custom observed during the performances of Mulian drama. Performed every three, five, ten, or fifteen years, the play took up three concatenated days, five or seven days to complete. For instance, villagers in the Shitai 石臺 county in Anhui province set up a platform for making sacrifice to the Chang spirit (jichang tai 祭猖臺) before the play

began. On the platform, they shed chicken blood, burned incense, and kowtowed to welcome the Chang spirit. Next, five villagers assumed the roles of the five-fury spirits by coloring their faces with pigments of red, yellow, blue, white, and black, respectively, while five leaders of the ritual operatic society held a tablet, each symbolizing one of the five phases-- gold, wood, water, fire, and earth. Every participant of the performance troop held a steel fork, they were accompanied by villagers, and led by the head of the village as they walked towards the gate of *fengshui* of the village. On the road, no villager was allowed to speak to the actors, otherwise they would be “hit by the Chang spirit” (zhongchang 中猖). Then the crowd surrounded the platform, shaking their forks to create an atmosphere of rigor and spirituality. These ritualistic proceedings announced the beginning of the Mulian drama. After finishing the drama, a couple of additional dramas were performed as “a gift” paid to the villagers, the gift was called *pingtai xi*. The drama of *Journey to the West* was performed in this context. Its performance, called “a carnage of demons” (dazhanyao 大斬妖), was a way to finish the entire ritual by “cleaning up” or “sweeping up” all the invisible demons left in the air.¹⁷⁷

Further, in some local theaters, the trope of “journey to the west” was integrated into the plot of the Mulian drama. In Zheng Zhizhen’s 鄭之珍 drama script *Mulian jiumu xingxiao xiwen* 目連救母行孝戲文 (written to be performed in the Huizhou region of Anhui province),¹⁷⁸ on Mulian’s way to the Brahmaloaka Palace with an alms bowl, a magical transportation, the performance included a series of scenes related to the trope of “journey to the West:” “Guanyin Saves Mulian from Trouble” (Guanyin du’e 觀音度厄),

¹⁷⁷Mao Gengru 茆更茹, *Anhui mulianxi ziliao ji* 安徽目連戲資料集 (Taipei: Shihezheng jijin hui, 1997) 67.

¹⁷⁸ The edition I use is Zhang Zhao 張照, *Quanshan jinke* 勸善金科 (Guben xiqu congkan 9 ji).

“Dispatching Generals to Capture the Ape” (Qianjiang qinyuan 遣將擒猿), “White Ape Opening the Road” (Baiyuan kailu 白猿開路), “Carrying sutras to save his mother” (Tiaojing tiaomu 挑經挑母), “Passing by the Black Pine Forests” (Guo heisong lin 過黑松林), “Crossing the Icy Lake” (Guo hanbin chi 過寒冰池), “Climbing the Fire Mountain” (Guo huoyan shan 過火焰山), and “Crossing the Sand River” (Guo lansha he 過爛沙河).¹⁷⁹ Mulian’s passage through these fantastic realms is interspersed with two major scenes of Mulian’s mother’s passing through the Infernal Hell, “passing the Bridge of Sigh” and “Passing by the Gate of Ascending to the Heaven” 過升天門-- to be judged by the King Yama.



Figure 3.14: “Passing by the Sand River,” reprinted from *Quanshan jinke* 1981.

Zheng Zhizhen treated demons encountered on the road as people of ill-mindedness who the audience would very likely encounter in their daily life. Sand Monk is the emblem of an evil-hearted person who “hides his murdering blade behind his smiling face” (Sharen dao zai xiaoli cang 殺人刀在笑里藏). Thus defeating demons is a

¹⁷⁹ Guo Qitao, *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage: The Confucian Transformation of Popular Culture in Late Imperial Huizhou* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005) 112.

necessary step for Mulian to become Buddha; for a common audience that would mean that treating petty men in everyday life with a good-hearted manner would help him or her accumulate good karma, nurture the inner self, and offer a better chance to go to heaven. The Western Heaven then becomes a metaphorical periphery of a quotidian center about human frailty as intensively embodied in the infernal hell represented on stage.

While the demon in “Passing of the Sand River” in Zheng Zhizhen’s script serves as a foil to showcase the ideal self of Mulian and relieve the audience from quotidian constraint, in the Qi 祁 version of the Mulian drama in Hunan, the course of the pilgrimage is represented by the actor leaving the stage and making a procession through nearby villages that sponsored the opera. Every villager pays homage and alms to the actor as if he were a real honorable monk, or as if they were all on stage.¹⁸⁰ There, the “them” encountered in the world of the actor turns out to be “us” in the audience’s world. This fusing of the theatrical and the ritual with the realistic and the mundane then blurs the boundary between the audience and the actors, which at once turns the human world into the world of ritual and divine and vice versa.

The fact that “journey to the West” has flexible communal ritualistic function that can easily be adapted to local purposes is further elaborated in the scene of “White Ape Opening the Road” (Baiyuan kailu 白猿開路) of the Mulian *naogu zaxi* 鑼鼓雜戲 (the miscellaneous drama with cymbals and drums) performed at the Longyan 龍岩 Temple of Southern Shanxi (Xinjiang 新絳, yuncheng 運城, Linqi 臨猗, Wanrong 萬榮) before

¹⁸⁰ See David Johnson, “Actions speak Louder than Words,” *Ritual Opera, Operatic Ritual: “Mu-lien Rescues His Mother” in Chinese Popular Culture: Papers from the International Workshop on the Mu-lien Operas, with an Additional Contribution on the Woman Huang Legend by Beata Grant*, ed. David Johnson (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California: distributed by IEAS Publications, 1989) 27.

and after the Spring Festival. The White Ape, like Monkey in *TGTAS*, leads Mulian westward to the Pool of Icy Lake where they encounter the Black Dragon Spirit and its sister Dragon Girl. Monkey could not defeat her until Heavenly Master Zhang and Generals, the Thunder God, comes to assist him. In this temple, defeating all sea monsters in the oceanic West, i.e, the Sand River, the Ocean (the black dragon), the Cold Ice Pond, (the Fish spirit and the Dragon girl), and the Ocean, served the ritualistic purpose for local farmers to pray for harvests, which were to be determined by the dragon deity at the Dragon Cliff Temple.¹⁸¹

In a similar scene of the Mulian puppy show at Quanzhou 泉州 of Fujian, Guanyin helps Mulian to defeat Sandy, White Horse, Spiders, Gigantic Snakes, and Red-Faced Ghost. In the precious scroll performed in the form of *Xifu luantan* 西府亂彈 that began to prevail in early-Ming Gansu province, the White Ape is captured and trained to lead Mulian to go to the Kunlun Mountain to procure sutras, and they have captured the Black Bear, and defeated daughter of the Emerald Screen Mountain and the Iron Fan Princess.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ See “Baiyuan kailu” 白猿開路, *Shanxi difang xiqu huibian* 山西地方戲曲彙編 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1981) 494-557.

¹⁸² Zhu Hengfu 朱恆夫, Mulian xi zhong Sun Wukong xushi kao 目連戲中孫悟空敘事考, *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 (1993:1) 143-153.

Why did the trope of “journey to the west” prevail in various rituals of Chinese local societies? Firstly, the trope about the western paradise easily supplements and completes the story about a journey through the hell, demonstrating the symmetric structure of the mythological universe that has both the hell and the heaven. Secondly, it is the ceaseless, loose, flexible, and mechanical structure of the trope of “journey to the West” that allows communal participation in the Mulian play because this trope can accommodate as many people as possible into the performance space without necessarily disturbing the core plot development.

Victor Turner has proposed the concept of liminal and liminoid to illustrate the distinction between ritual opera and commercial opera. Liminal phenomenon means all-round participation and responsibility, reflecting a community’s depository experiences; liminoid is more personal, evincing flavor and taste in the cultural market competition. I have shown that the very tradition of *JW*’s dramatic antecedents since the performance of transformation texts demonstrates the characteristic of liminality that is oriented towards the reader and communal participation. The quest journeys in *TGTAS* and *Subduing the Demons* functions as an ideal for the audience not to identify with, but to make them hold awe and fear with a certain psychological distance towards the breathtaking epic journeys. Continuing the tradition of *TGTAS*, the theatrical performance of the Mulian drama and its involvement with the theme of “journey to the West” requires the audience to merge with the actors and the scenes to experience a climactic catharsis and generate intense psychological responses to the five fury ghosts. These ghosts are summoned through the staging of Madame Liu’s ghost that is to be captured together by the actor and the crowd (Johnson 29).

In *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Victor Turner and Edith Turner

write:

Such journeys in Christendom lies the paradigm of the *via crucis*, with the added purgatorial element appropriate to fallen men. While monastic contemplative and mystics could daily make interior salvific journeys, those in the world had to exteriorize theirs in the infrequent adventure of pilgrimage. For the majority, pilgrimage wasted the great liminal experience of the religious life. If mysticism is an interior pilgrimage, pilgrimage is exteriorized mysticism.¹⁸³

The theatrical performances of *MRHM* at local villages in late imperial China were interior pilgrimages of the audiences that exercised a certain mystical force in their psyche and imagination. In his treatise on poetry, Aristotle discussed the subject of the catharsis of tragic emotions and defines the pleasure of tragedy as coming from the pity and fear, and through imitation. For Aristotle, tragedy is more effective in achieving pleasure than epic. In the context of *MRHM*, the pleasure seems to come from the miraculous and the mystical as well as the collective effort to exorcise and purge the ghosts and demons.

¹⁸³ Victor Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOKES ON THE WORLD: LAUGHTER, CANNIBALISM, AND GENERIC INVENTION IN *JOURNEY TO THE WEST*

Introduction

Chapter four focuses on *Journey to the West*. Through a close reading of the text, this chapter analyzes the humor of cannibalism, sexuality, and exogamous marriage with demons to discuss the moral, psychological, and sociological community present in the shared imagination of the narrator and the reader. It argues that the laughter created by discursive verbal jokes in *JW*, which are based upon the language of everyday activities, creates a ritual foundation for the narrator and the reader, allowing them to imagine a more fluid moral identity. Small subjunctive spaces shift the boundary between humans and demons bit by bit. The binary of human and non-human then naturalizes the binary of Chinese and non-Chinese and the empire itself. Thus it is instructive to know that the unitary, singular, and progressive narrative paradigm of *JW*, a narrative that had never before appeared in Chinese elite full-length vernacular fiction, functions to hold together all its loose episodes. This chapter posits that this unique narrative paradigm is derived from the vigorous reading habits of the late Ming--the scholar's vicarious journey taking place in their reading at home.

Joking about Bribery

The full-length vernacular fiction *Xiyou Ji* 西遊記 (*Journey to the West*, earliest extant edition dates to 1592, hereafter *JW*) recounts the story of the famous Buddhist monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-664) (also named Tripitaka or Sanzang 三藏) and his four

animal disciples as they travel to India to bring back the Mahayana sutras. Unlike *RNS*, in which every expedition undertaken by its heroes symbolizes their loyalty, by the end of *Journey to the West*, all the hardship that the pilgrims experienced dissolves into one giant joke. The first sutras obtained are wordless scriptures and thus are worthless to the unenlightened Chinese who only can read lesser sutras with words. This is because Ānanda 阿儼 and Kāśyapa 迦葉, the two Honorable Ones guarding the library of scriptures, shamelessly demand gifts, and that Tripitaka, without any clue about bodhisattvas being materialistic, has prepared none. Consequently they only give him blank books. However, not only are Ānanda and Kāśyapa not punished by the Buddha, who even consents to what they do, they insist on gifts for a second time before becoming willing to give away the sutras with words. Tripitaka has to present his alms bowl as a gift. Other deities surround them, nonetheless, and laugh about the bribery:

被那些管珍樓的力士、管香積的庖丁、看閣的尊者，你抹他臉，我撲他背，彈指的，扭唇的，一個個笑道：“不羞，不羞，需索取經的人事。”須臾，把臉皮都羞皺了，只是拿著鉢盂不放。

All those vira who guarded the precious towers, the kitchen helpers in charge of sacrifices and incense, and the Honored Ones who worked in the treasure loft began to clap one another on the back and tickle one another on the face. Snapping their fingers and curling their lips, every one of them said, “How shameless! How shameless! Asking the scripture seeker for a present!” After a while, the two Honored Ones became rather embarrassed, though Ānanda continued to clutch firmly at the alms bowl. (Yu 4: 394) Actions such as “clap,” “tickle,” “snapping their fingers,” and “curling their lips” signify a humorous and comical audience mirroring the intended readers of the story. Through the affective laughter and the alms bowl bribe, readers are lead to take sides with the laughing bystanders, as if readers laugh precisely because the bystanders laugh. The laughter (and the laughter about the laughter) about the greedy Indian monks is an invitation for readers to reflect that even the center of the Buddhist cosmos--the Spirit Mountain--is demoralized.

In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud summarizes the triangular structure of jokes, which consists of a teller, a target, and an audience. In order for a joke

to take effect, the teller and the audience must share “the same internal inhibitions, which the joke-work has overcome in the [teller].”¹⁸⁴ For instance, there is another version of this joke in *JW* included in an anthology of jokes named *Xiao Zan* 笑贊 (eulogy to jokes), compiled and commented on by Zhao Nanxing 趙南星 (1550-1627), which was circulated widely in the late Ming. The joke is about Tripitaka trying to comfort Piggy, who disappointedly complains about Buddha’s love of money: “No worries, disciple, after we go back, we will also get paid for chanting sutras for people” 徒弟不要煩惱，我們回去，少不的也替人家誦經。¹⁸⁵ Through turning disappointment at religious corruption at the center of the Buddhist cosmos into an assurance of the omnipresence of monetarism, the humor erases the moral parameter, the “internal inhibitions,” thus erasing the boundary between “us” and “them.”

In the Buddhist geographical imagination, India is located at the center, and China is on the margins. According to Fa Xian’s 法顯 travelogue on India, the Indian monks called the Chinese “border people,” or bianren 邊人, indicating the existence of a binary of the center and the margin in Buddhist geography. Yet in the Buddhist theological cosmos, there can be no true center, but perhaps multiple centers. For example, Sen Zhao 僧肇 (384-414), the genius disciple of Kumarajiva, has conjectured in his treatise “On the Immutability of Things” (wu bu qian lun 物不遷論) that there is no movement in the world of Dharma, thus Dharma is everywhere.

夫生死交謝。寒暑叠遷。有物流動。人之常情。余則謂之不然。何者。放光雲。無去來。無動轉者。

The life cycle alternates between life and death. Winter and summer rotate

¹⁸⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Norton, 1960), p. 151.

¹⁸⁵ See Chen Weili, Guo Junfeng eds., *Zhongguo lidai xiaohua jicheng* 中國歷代笑話集成 (Changchun: Shidai wenyi chubanshe), p. 414-415.

repeatedly. Things flow and move. People think this normal. I, however, say this is not so. Why? The *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* says, the Dharma comes and goes from nowhere, thus does not move and circulate.

Since there is no circulation, Dharma then can be everywhere. The reason that we common people cannot sense Dharma close-by is because of the inherent nature of things--their “unknowability” 近而不可知者。其唯物性乎。

Nonetheless, in the jokes, the above-mentioned Buddhist worldview is exchanged with a notion of monetary universalism. In the joke that is collected in *Xiao Zan*, which also circulated as an independent joke in the late Ming, the joke is told from the point of view of a rather worldly Tripitaka. For him, the “us” entail both those scripture preachers and those who make money through whatever means. For him, there is no difference between “us” and “them,” the bodhisattvas in India. What was first represented as striking is replaced with the familiar and commonplace image of monetarism. Freud summarizes the pleasure of reading a joke as derived from “the rediscovery of what is familiar” (Freud 148-149). The pleasure of “recognition” is made possible by the construction of psychological obstacles for the reader (149). The late-Ming joke about materialistic monks and materialism has the same rhetorical mechanism as the creation of pleasure. Such a mechanism then completely de-centers Buddhist geography, erasing Buddhist theological thinking about the cosmos, and rather picturing a world ruled by money, a world whose center is money.

In the joke that is at the end of *JW*, however, monetarism and bribery are still disparaged, and the joke lubricates such moral judgment. The three types of jokes that Freud delineates all achieve a semantic humor through the depreciatory judgment of, or an innocent attitude towards a target by playing with words or concepts, either through the coining of new words by condensation, by rendering alternative meanings to familiar

syntaxes, or by displacing the logic of thought. The joke in *JW*, however, perhaps not a brilliant by Freud's standards, is simply achieved through the rhetorical strategy of *describing* the fictional audience's reaction to the event: verbs such as "clap," "tickle," "snapping their fingers," and "curling their lips" exert an affective influence on the reader, and even the action of Ānanda-- "clutching firmly at the alms bowl"-- amuse the reader. These descriptive verbs soften the depreciative judgment of the monks, so much so that the image of the depreciative laughter arouses even more laughter. The readers do not laugh about the bribery itself, but rather the humorous description of the discovery of the bribery. That is to say, the joke releases inhibited pleasure through *describing* and *narrating* the laughter, the laughers, and the laughable image of the target, while also maintaining a moral judgment that is shared by both the narrator and the reader.

There is a moral identity, or a sociological and psychological community shared by the narrator and the reader. There are the *normal* expectations of a pilgrimage as a linear progression in the search of the self's enlightenment--the closer the pilgrim approaches to the sacred center, the more miraculous he feels in the presence of God. This process of enlightenment can be a metaphor for the process of intellectual activities as well. Furthermore, what is associated with this expectation is a moral expectation of the Buddha. The narrator's play with the intellectual conception of a pilgrimage can be sensed in the annotations of an anonymous late-Ming commentator of *JW*, who attributes his work to the famed literatus Li Zhuowu 李卓吾 (1527–1602): "Extremely funny, but [he or they] is [or are] not moral" (qushen, zhishi budang renzi 趣甚，只是不當人子) (Wu 2: 1343). The omission of the subject here makes it ambiguous whether it is the character who is immoral or the teller of the joke who is immoral in making such a joke

about Tripitaka's pilgrimage. The joke does not dictate the reader's ethical judgment even though the reader has become more tolerant to bribery. Even so, at that moment the reader finds it unethical for saints in the sacred center to be materialistic.

Freud points out that jokes are a social expression of individuals' unconscious ideas, and that jokes are either for the purpose of "aggressiveness, satire, or defense," or "exposure." In the joke at the end of *JW*, however, the unconscious that is exposed is not merely a satire of the corrupt, but more importantly, a leniency tinted with an understanding comical tonality. Such unconscious is intricately related to our worship of saints and Buddhism, and our yearning for enlightenment. For instance, Monkey's words spell out his disdain for corruption and power:

行者嚷道：“如來！我師徒們受了萬蜚千魔，千辛萬苦，自東土拜到此處，蒙如來吩咐傳經，被阿儺、伽葉捐財不遂，通同作弊，故意將無字的白紙本兒教我們拿去，我們拿他去何用！望如來救治！”

Pilgrim shouted “Tathagata, we master and disciples had to experience ten thousand stings and a thousand demons in order to come bowing from the Land of the East. After you had specifically ordered the scriptures to be given to us, Ananda and Kasyapa sought a bribe from us; when they didn't succeed, they conspired in fraud and deliberately handed over wordless texts to us. Even if we took them, what good would they do? Pardon me, Tathagata, but you must deal with this matter!” (393)

What Monkey's words have assumed and reinforced is again the center-periphery binary in terms of Buddhist learning. We detest the corrupt power at the center, and resent our ignorance and dependence on the center in the same manner that we resent power's corruption and its exploitation of us. However, what the joke reveals about the unconscious mentality of the community is the possibility that bodhisattvas are no different from us, that if there is ever a center-periphery binary it will be a moral one, and

that it is almost understandable why bodhisattvas are so materialistic, since we are like them. The joke in *JW* thus not only reveals a certain moral identity in the psychological community, but more importantly, it fosters a reconciliation that thaws the pre-conceived hierarchy.

Not unlike this joke about the corruption of the Buddha, the biggest joke in *JW* is perhaps the form of *JW* itself, which fictionalizes the pilgrimage of Tripitaka by utilizing the trope of cannibalism. In *JW*'s imagination, the hardship of Xuanzang's pilgrimage to India is caused by demons' craving of Tripitaka's flesh and his virginity, for his flesh and virginity will allow his eaters and the female demons who have sex with him obtain immortality. The trope of cannibalism in *JW* comes from a long tradition in the development of the lore of "Journey to the West", which I analyze in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I will focus on cannibalism as a joke in *JW* in the sense that it sublimates history into a fantasy about encounters between humans and demons. *JW* expresses this fantasy by imagining a journey beyond any realistic geographical containment, a world where humans are not at the center of the story, and where beasts like Monkey and Piggy take center stage.

Throughout the entire fiction, what *JW* asks is precisely how to define the boundary between the human and the demon or the deity--the "us" and the "them" through the lens of moral identity. What would happen if the most admirable creature is not man but beasts and demons? Additionally, what would happen if moral identity was not abided by man and beast alike? In this case, corruption and cannibalism are two related issues. The presence of corruption means a certain perversion and depravity of

moral integrity-- a term tinted with moral righteousness, whereas cannibalism is simply an extreme and symbolic representation of moral corruption, having a deeper psychological association that could be applied to everyone. Freud in *Totem and Taboo* proposes that cannibalism is a symbolic trope of the murder and consumption of the father by his sons: their devouring of his flesh suggests their patriarchal identity with him. Cannibalism is their repressed wish to escape the Oedipus complex, which is contradictory to their moral identity. The kind of cannibalism that *JW* details is both: it is used to explore the fundamental issue of humanity that is intricately related to moral corruption and moral identity. Furthermore, words on cannibalism are generally expressed in the form of jokes in *JW*. Moreover, the trope of cannibalism in *JW* is itself imbued with monetary and political meaning related to personal identity. One instance is the words said by a cannibalistic demon, “Buy one get one free” (que bushi mai yige you rao yige 卻不是買一個又饒一個), which shows how bodies are intricately related to commodities. It is the demons’ fetishization of Tripitaka’s flesh and his disciples’ “treasure objects,” baobei 寶貝 as a means for elevating themselves to the status of an immortal that motivates their cannibalism, and their desire to eliminate Tripitaka and his disciples.

Subjunctive Cannibalism, or the Pleasure of Imagination

JW details that Tripitaka and his disciples travel to Flat-Top Mountain where there are two demons named Gold Horn King and Silver Horn King, who are dispatching their servants to capture the pilgrims for them to eat and achieve immortality. The local

earth god then transforms into a firewood cutter to warn Monkey about their imminent danger. He says:

樵子道：“他正要吃你们哩。”行者道：“造化！造化！但不知他怎的样吃哩？”樵子道：“你要他怎的吃？”行者道：“若是先吃头，还好耍子；若是先吃脚，就难为了。”樵子道：“先吃头怎么说？先吃脚怎么说？”行者道：“你还不曾经着哩。若是先吃头，一口将他咬下，我已死了，凭他怎么煎炒熬煮，我也不知疼痛；若是先吃脚，他啃了孤拐，嚼了腿亭，吃到腰截骨，我还急忙不死，却不是零零碎碎受苦？此所以难为也。”樵子道：“和尚，他那里有这许多工夫？只是把你拿住，捆在笼里，囫圇蒸吃了。”行者笑道：“这个更好！更好！疼倒不忍疼，只是受些闷气罢了。”

The woodcutter says, “he wants to eat you!” Pilgrim says, “What a luck, what a luck! But how is he going to eat me? The woodcutter says, “How do you want him to eat you?” Pilgrim says, “If he eats starting from my head, then it would be ok. If he starts from my feet, then it will problematic.” The woodcutter says, “What do you mean by starting from your head, and by starting from your feet?” Pilgrim says, “You haven’t experienced this. If he eats from my head, then he will bite up my head. I will be dead then. Whatever way he cooks me, frying, sauteing, boiling, brewing, I won’t feel any pain. If he eats me starting from my feet. He will then first eat up my legs, then my thighs, and then my waist. If I do not die in a second, wouldn’t I suffer from the protracted pain bit by bit? This is the problem.” The woodcutter says, “Monk, how much time does he have? He will just capture you, and then bind you in a cage. He will steam you as a whole.” Pilgrim says, “This is better! This is better! There won’t be pain. There will just be some suppressed air!”

The very crux of this joke of Monkey is him imagining himself to be a normal human suffering from the protracted torture of being eaten alive by a demon. The response shared by the joke teller and the reader is the fear of cannibalism as well as the presumption that Monkey is somewhat like a demon. Once a cannibalistic demon himself, he is now invincible with unparalleled magic. His joke about suffering reminds the reader that he is the “ancestor of creating horror” (xiahu de zuzong 嚇虎的祖宗). The laughter caused by Monkey’s joke is achieved through his exaggerated elaboration of two different ways of suffering from cannibalism, one starting from his head, and the other

starting from his feet. The details of the imaginative pain, “He eats up my legs, and then my thighs, and my waist bones” 他啃了孤拐，嚼了腿亭，吃到腰截骨, are glossed over by Monkey’s funny rhetoric, “it will be fun” 还好耍子 and “suffering the pain bit by bit” 零零碎碎受苦. The adverbs, not a pun or anything else, function to tickle the reader to laugh at the details of the imaginary pain.

It is the power of imagination through language that makes the joke effective. We laugh because we are convinced by the depiction of the event that a man being eaten in this way is possible. This joke seems to simultaneously distance Monkey from the reader (through his seemingly grotesque exposure of the process of cannibalism) and draw him closer to the reader (because everyone takes away pleasure and pain in imagining a cannibalistic scene). For a moment, we might believe that Monkey will be like humans suffering from this pain of being eaten because Monkey is everything that is *not* what he describes in his joke. The power of imagination makes Monkey into a mortal, like “us.”

Monkey’s imaginative exposure of the grotesque process of cannibalism also makes Monkey a demon again. One could easily imagine him as the cannibal who empathizes with his victim’s suffering. For one thing, Monkey has never really been an authentic immortal, nor a real monk or human. He merely “resembles the image of human beings” (si renxiang 似人相) but “is not categorized as human” (不入人名), “resembling barbarians” (si luochong 似裸虫) but not living in their culture and politics. Most of the time, strangers in *JW* describe him as a disfigured being: “skeleton face, flattened brow, collapsed nose, jutting jowl, and hairy eyes. A consumptive ghost, no

doubt” 骨搥臉，磕額頭，塌鼻子，凹頤腮，毛眼毛睛，癆病鬼 (Wu 2: 911; Yu 3: 274). Because he is not human, his first Taoist teacher is unwilling to teach him the way of immortality. Tripitaka in the beginning also says that Monkey is “by nature wild, ferocious, and stubborn” (xingpo xiongwan 性潑兇頑) and murderous, thus he “is not qualified as a monk” 做不得和尚 (Chap. 14). Even though Monkey considers himself an immortal,¹⁸⁶ he is not granted any title, nor office post or rank, until he successfully helps Tripitaka bring the Mahayana sutras back to China. He is subsequently named by the Buddha as *douzhan shengfo* 鬥戰勝佛. His magnificent self-appointed title “the Great Sage, Equal to Heaven” (qitian dasheng 齊天大聖), similar to his humble official title of *bimawen* 弼馬溫, horse feeder, does not count as Heaven’s official acknowledgement of his position in the pantheon.

Because of the power of imagination, owing to the lively rhetoric of its descriptive and detailed language, the subjunctive image of Monkey impacts his identity as either a Buddhist disciple or a converted demon. In effect, the desire for cannibalism underlying his shifting image is more explicit than it is suppressed. For example, Piggy complains during a night at the Wuji kingdom that:

八戒醒来道：“甚么土地土地？当时我做好汉，专一吃人度日，受用腥膻，其实快活，偏你出家，教我们保护你跑路！原说只做和尚，如今拿做奴才，日间挑包袱牵马，夜间提尿瓶务脚！这早晚不睡，又叫徒弟作甚？”

Piggy says, “What earth god? Once upon a time, I lived by eating people exclusively. Even though the meat stink, I was indeed happy. Now that you are a monk, and you asked me to protect you for your pilgrimage. You originally said that I was to be a monk. Now you use me as your slave! In the days, I carry packages and lead the horse.

¹⁸⁶ “I myself is also of an animal (shoulei 獸類), but as long as a sentient being has nine orifices, it can cultivate itself and become an immortal” 大抵世間之物，凡有九竅者，皆可以修行成仙 (Yu 358; Wu 1: 238)

In the night, I carry urine pot and warm your feet! And you are still not asleep yet; why do you call me disciple again?

Furthermore, the simulacrum of Monkey, the Six-Ear Monkey, who in every aspect resembles Monkey, beats Tripitaka into a coma after he scolds Monkey for his killing. Consequently, he is called by Tathagata as “two minds” (erxin 二心). The term puts forward the idea that Monkey, symbolizing freedom of mind or distraction of mind, could be by nature a non-human, not tamable or unable to be acculturated.

The subjunctive space, the “what if” scenario, creates a shared space for the narrator and the reader to collectively reflect upon moral values through the exploration of their opposite. In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Emile Durkheim argues that sacred ritual ceremonies construct subjunctive spaces for communities to agree upon an external religious and ritual order. In Monkey’s joke on cannibalism and the narrator’s imagination of Monkey’s potential subversive nature as an in-born cannibal, the kind of laughing force generated through such imagination functions as the process of ritual for the community to collectively experience *internal* immoral actions. “We” then are like cannibals.

This ritual of laughing that occurs between the narrator and the reader is further confirmed by the fact that the jokes about cannibalism in *JW* are related to everyday eating, the most regular of ritual activities. When overhearing that the Silver-Horn Monster is going to savor his air-dried and salted flesh after having him soaked in water for days, Piggy jokes to himself that he “meets a demon who sells sausages” (撞著個販腌臘的妖怪了) (Wu 1:448). This joke again demarcates a small subjunctive space for

forming a mini meta-story that translates his miserable capture into a comical rendezvous with a sausage vendor. Here, Piggy assumes that his audience is familiar with buying sausages from vendors. The insignificant act of purchase builds up the basis for the community to understand the joke. Yet buying sausages from a demon, or the fact that the narrator creates a scenario for such an encounter with a sausage-selling demon, also gives rise to a defamiliarized, exciting, and comical experience of the everyday. It is where the power of imagination influences our feeling about the everyday.

The cannibals as imagined in the jokes based upon the language of the everyday thus push the reader to hold back their moral judgments, altering the center-periphery binary. Laughter dissolves the concern of whether Monkey is by nature a cannibal or a demon or not, little by little undermining a pre-conceived moral identity. On the other hand, however, laughter also confirms to the reader that the cannibal is only imaginary, creating the boundary between the real and the fantastic, reaffirming moral values. Thus, these cannibal jokes create a fluid and shifting identity of Monkey that the reader finds difficult to get a hold of.

It is precisely because of the drifting and shuffling boundary between humanity and monstrosity that one finds that “the demon” might inflect some aspects of “the human,” and that “the human” might very possibly be “the demon.” Thus it is unclear whether exocannibalism is to some extent endocannibalism. Cannibalism has long been credited as the essential rhetorical strategy of alterity, a deeply-embedded metaphor in the myths and folklores of many cultures across the world for expressing the idea of xenophobia. It is especially so for exocannibalism, which is how one community tries to exterminate its enemy. Yet endocannibalism similarly suggests internal conflicts.

Clearly, *JW* recounts many stories of endocannibalism, such as how local people offer children as sacrifices to demons in exchange for local peace, and how bewitched and deceived human kings eat children in order to obtain immortality. For example, in the Country of Small Children, the king, seduced by a demon who metamorphoses into a beautiful girl, and deceived by her father, also a demon, decrees that his people should contribute their 5-year-old children, totaling one thousand one hundred and eleven, as an “introductory ingredient” (yinzi 引子) of the herbal medicine made by the demons for him to gain immortality. What the story infers is a common trope of cannibalism. Cannibalism happens when the ruler is corrupt and the empire is about to collapse. Its implication is that men are more demonic than animals, a metaphor that modifies Confucius’s words, “bad administration is more ferocious than a tiger” (苛政猛於虎也).

In late Ming fiction, however, the trope of cannibalism takes a twist and is represented specifically as realistic depictions of kidnapping and eating children. In Yuan Yuling’s 袁于令 (1599-1654) *Suishi yiwen* 隨史遺文, the protagonist Qin Shubao 秦叔寶 hears many parents in a village loudly crying over their kidnapped children. He then eavesdrops on a conversation between several men and an old man:

一個道便是前日張家這娃子抓了去一個道昨日王嫂子家孩子也被偷了去他老子撥去開河家來怎了一個道罕稀他家的娃子哩趙家夫妻單生這個兒却是生金子般昨夜也失了那老子點頭嘆息的道好狠子這村坊上也去了二三十個好孩子了叔寶就向那老人問道老丈敢這村坊被往來督工軍士拐騙了幾個小兒去麼老者道拐騙去的倒也還得個命却拿去便殺了却也不關軍士事自有這一干賊叔寶道便是這兩年年成也好這地方吃人那老者道客官有所不知只爲開河這總管好的是小兒將來殺害加上五味爛蒸了吃所以有這幹賊人把人家小子偷去蒸熟去獻便賞得幾兩銀子賊也不止一個被盜的也不止我一村。

One says: “the day before yesterday, the kid from the Zhang family was kidnapped. Yesterday, Sister Wang’s kid was also stolen. How his father is going to miss

his kid after he returns from the Kai river? The only son of this Zhao couple is like gold. Yet he is also lost. That old man nods and sighs, “How merciless! This village has lost twenty to thirty good children!” Shubao then asks that old man, “old uncle, dare I ask if these children were kidnapped by the soldiers and military supervisors?” That old man says, “if they are kidnapped by them, then they can still live. Yet it is nothing of the soldiers’ business. The kids are all killed.” Shubao then says, “in the last two years, we have had harvests. How come there is cannibalism in this place?” That old man says, “Passenger, you don’t know. it is because the minister of the Kai River is addicted to eating children. Thus, he captures them, kills them, seasons them with five spices and steams them to eat. Thus, there is a gang of thieves who steal children away and steam them up so as to present them as gifts for the minister to get some rewarding silvers. The thief is not just one. The village who lost children is also not just one.

What is most interesting about this description is less the general political criticism evinced in the exposing of corruption, demoralization, and inhumane activities, than the realistic portrayal of large-scale children stealing and eating. This is emphasized to the extent that it reveals that children were the fetishized object for a cannibalistic minister, sycophants, and soldiers who are human traffickers.

Cannibalism in the Country of Children in *JW* differs from the type of cannibalism present in the local village in *Suishi yiwen* in that it lacks realistic references. The narrator has a propensity to give readers Buddhist allegories. If jokes in *JW* deliver a sense of irony, then jokes and allegory are two adjacent concepts. An allegory speaks of one thing while meaning something else. The jokes on cannibalism that I have analyzed indicate that they speak of something that is totally different from the context, and yet connected to the reader’s reality. Even though in the case of the Country of Children, the allegory’s abstractness does not reduce the political meaning of cannibalism, eating children is somehow naturalized and integrated as a generic element. Thus, after seeing Tripitaka, a demon says to the king,

那東土差去取經的和尚，我看他器宇清淨，容顏齊整，乃是個十世修行的真

體，自幼為僧，元陽未泄，比那小兒更強萬倍。若得他的心肝煎湯，服我的仙藥，足保萬年之壽。

The monk who has been sent by the Land of the East to seek scriptures is possessed of pure and orderly features. They reveal that he has, in fact, a true body which has practiced religion for at least ten incarnations, and that he has been a monk since childhood. He is, in truth, someone who has never dissipated his original yang, someone ten thousand times better than all those little boys put together. If you can get his heart to make soup and take my divine medicine, you will certainly acquire the age of ten thousand years. (Yu 4: 52)

As in every other place in *JW*, Tripitaka's flesh is fetishized just as immortality is fetishized. The demon asks the king to order his soldiers to take Tripitaka's heart out alive. Monkey then metamorphoses into Tripitaka, using his magic to cut up his own belly, and takes out his multiple hearts to display in front of the crowd. All are bad hearts: a heart of jealousy, a heart of vanity, and a heart of wariness. Yet he can not find the worst heart, a black heart. His magical act is utilized to awaken the audience to the fact that it is a demon who has the worst heart because he makes such a call of taking out a human heart. This episode can be viewed as an allegory in the sense that it speaks to the reader about its criticism of people's harmful conduct to each other, out of their lust, vanity, and provincial mindset. Yet this allegory does not seem to resonate with the reader as much as the jokes and the story do. What the narrator is concerned with is less moral values per se than the pleasure of telling a story about the process of how Monkey manages to defeat evil.

Naturalized Culturalism: Imagining Sex and Marriage with Demons

In *JW*, not only are moral values harder to define, but also the political is more implied than explicitly stated. Politics can be best sensed through the trope of marriage

and sexuality. Food and sex are both riveting to the narrator and the reader alike in imagining the demonic. In fact, food and sex are two sides of one coin. For one thing, the Chinese term *renrou* 人肉, literally, human flesh, or *rou* 肉, flesh, can metaphorically mean prostitution and sexuality. When the pilgrims arrive at the Country of Women, the queen hopes to marry Tripitaka because “東土男人，乃唐朝御弟。我國中自混沌開辟之時，累代帝王，更不曾見個男人至此。幸今唐王御弟下降，想是天賜來的。”

What the queen emphasizes is not the cliché notion of the Sino-centric order, but more of the naturalized binary, the sexual and physical identity: man and woman and their physiography. She dismisses the animal disciples because they look ugly. Later the narrator states, through the mouth of Tripitaka, that the disciples are “are not Chinese [from the Tang empire]” (*tangchao renwu* 唐朝人物), signifying a self-consciousness to demarcate the “handsome” Chinese from beastly monsters. What is then presumed is the importance of physiognomy as the fundamental marker of culturalism. Sexuality and marriage go hand in hand to further manifest the attractiveness of a culture. What should be pointed out is that besides the implied Sino-centric order, there is another layer of order that tends to weaken the Sino-centric worldview. The narrator describes the wedding banquets as, “you look at that country of women, even though it is a state of women, that imperial rituals are no less prosperous than China” 你看那西梁國雖是婦女之邦，那鑾輿不亞中華之盛. What the narrator seems to imply is that it is the country of women that is the center of the region, suggesting that the Sino-centric worldview is compatible (as it is naturalized and presumed) with a more positive perception of a foreign state, treating it as the center of the local region.

The mutually permeating views of a Sino-centric order and a world order where

China is not at the center correspond to the fusion of different moral standards explored in the jokes on cannibalism. What immediately follows the episode on the queen's courting of Tripitaka, is Scorpio Demon's verbal joke on cannibalism--inviting Tripitaka to eat human flesh buns. However, although Tripitaka refuses the seduction of the Scorpio and the queen, the seductive narrative of the sexual encounters titillates the reader to imagine a "what if" scenario. The vulnerability of Tripitaka also reiterates the possibility of a decadence and demoralization of the center. Thus, there is a fusion between the two in our imagination. The pleasure elicited out of our reading is how demons appear to become part of "us" and that nothing can impede "us" from mingling with "them." This is because the narrative pleasure is imparted precisely by the forbidden behaviors of swindling, kidnapping, coercion, and cannibalism.

On the other hand, while the pleasure of imagining sexuality dissolves moral identity, that very sexual pleasure is the projection of the self's mind. The episode on Piggy's encounter with the eight spiders reads:

那怪慌了手腳，那裡顧甚麼羞恥，只是性命要緊，隨用手侮著羞處，跳出水來，都跑在亭子裡站立，作出法來：臍孔中骨都都冒出絲繩，瞞天搭了個大絲篷，把八戒罩在當中。(Wu 2: 990)

Terribly flustered, the fiends did not care about shame any more, but only thought of saving their own lives. Covering their private parts with their hands, they jumped out of the water and stood by the pavilions to exercise their magic. The silky threads began to bubble out of their navels, and in no time at all, a gigantic silk tent confined and enclosed Piggy inside. (Yu 3: 368 translation revised)

This is one of the many typical episodes of *Journey* that evinces an incredible sense of pleasure in narrating Piggy's sexually implicit game with the female monsters. Indeed, it is the pleasure of telling a story about the self's topsy-turvy encounter with the other. If we further think about these spiders, they are simply one of the common insects

that we are very familiar with. More importantly, they embody seven passions, i.e., fear 惧, anger 怒, love 愛, hatred 恨, greed 欲, sorrow 哀, and delight 喜. Here Piggy falls into the snare of his own emotions, rather than that of another. Nonetheless, this allegory does not stop the reader's laughter because the story lifts his or hers internal inhibition of imagining a cross-species encounter.

This cross-species encounter reminds us that the very existence of Monkey, Piggy, Sandy, and the White Horse, as well as the myriad of other beasts and supernatural beings--their appearance, words, behaviors, and conducts in *JW*, is a source of laughter to the reader from beginning to the end. It seems it is here that the politics of the human-centered order, the politics of the reader thinking of himself as the center, is naturalized. Additionally, the boundary between the reader as the human and the fiction as a beast begins to shift and move.

“The Beginning of the Mind,” or Generic Invention in *Journey to the West*

JW tells such a story. At the border between the Western Regions and China, Tripitaka meets Monkey of the Aolai 傲來 kingdom of the East Pūrvavideha Continent (dong sheng shenzhou 東勝神州); then he encounters Dragon Horse of the Western Ocean at the Eagle Plaintive Ravine of Habi 哈必 country; afterwards he comes upon Piggy in the country of Wusizang 烏斯藏 (nowadays Tibet) and Sandy of the Flowing Sand River on the border between South Jambūdvīpa and the West Aparagodānīya Continent (xi niu hezhou 西牛賀洲). They spend 14 years and traverse 108,000 li

together, across rivers, mountains, deserts, and foreign kingdoms; they also overcome 81 difficult situations by defeating the many demons who they encounter. Then they finally reach the Western kingdom of India in West Aparagodānīya.

Following the narrative conventions of *TGTAS*, *JWZJ*, and the various local Mulian dramas, whose narratives are a vast holding pool of loosely connected sequences of events strung together with contingency, *JW* combines even more numerous incidents, gods, demons, animals, magical battles, and multifarious phenomena. The 81 difficulties that the pilgrims must solve, in effect, represent the myriad of encounters that they face on the road. *JW*'s all-inclusive and expansive narrative unfolds a literary panorama that fuses the entire religious cosmos with the worldly pleasure of traveling the world. This narrative of wanderlust, excursion, and rambling is instructive. It resembles an exotic world map, an unusual collection of strange flora and fauna, and an encyclopedia of interesting anecdotes in Chinese history. These genres invite the reader to concentrate his or her focus anywhere at any time, enjoying every bit of information locally, information that is not to be found in normal textbooks, or in historical, geographical, or political accounts.

Thus, like its predecessors, what *JW* as a magical-travel romance can do--and what other kinds of romances cannot-- is the ceaseless celebration of the pleasure of storytelling as well as the pleasure of reading an unfamiliar world. Such tremendous pleasure from reading and creating a fun world is largely oriented towards the creator or the imaginary subject. Thus, it is not surprising that *JW* makes the mind the center of its fictional world, which is superimposed on the two extant world centers of the two world

systems in *JW*. One is Xi'an, the capital of Tang China, “viewed from the Map of China and Foreign Countries, the most preeminent place under Heaven” 華夷圖上看，天下最為頭 (Wu 1: 121). The other is Thunder-clap Monastery at the Spirit Mountain of Western Jambūdvīpa--the center of Buddhist cosmology, in which China is the periphery. *JW*, however, goes on to create a third world center, the Flower-Fruit Mountain (huaguo shan 花果山) “which constituted the chief range of the Ten Islets and formed the origin of the Three Islands, came into being after the creation of the world” 乃十洲之祖脈，三島之來龍，自開清濁而立，鴻蒙判後而成 (Yu 1: 66; Wu 1: 2). At the center of this center, is the divine stone that metamorphoses into the Monkey King. The stone is the metaphor of what the sixteenth-century anonymous commentator of *Journey* says is “the beginning of the mind” (xin zhi shi ye 心之始也) (Wu 1:3), while Monkey is what the scholar-official Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淞 (1567-1624) elucidates as the metaphor of “the spirit of the mind” (xin zhi shen ye 心之神也).¹⁸⁷

It is this mighty mind of freedom that is unrestrained by the regulations of Hell and Heaven, overturning the entire heavenly palace, yearning to be the God of Heaven, and only fearful of the Incantation of the Tightening Hoop that he wears on his head. Yet *JW* as a ceaseless, all-inclusive encyclopedic narrative also tries to contain Monkey as one of *JW*'s many unconscious classifications. It creates a simulacrum of Monkey--Six-Ear Monkey (liu'er mihou 六耳猕猴), who in every aspect resembles Monkey and wants to replace him because Six-Ear Monkey listens to the sounds of the world, observes the

¹⁸⁷ Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 and Liu Yuzhen 劉毓忱 eds., *Xiyou ji ziliao huibian* 西遊記資料彙編 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou shuhua shen, 1983) 214.

way, knows history and the future, and comprehends things. Thus he knows exactly the birth, stories, experiences, and capabilities of Monkey so that he can transform into Monkey. No one can differentiate Monkey from his simulacrum except Tathagata and an auspicious animal called Diting 諦聽 (literarily, listening carefully) who can

將四大部洲山川社稷、洞天福地之間，羸蟲鱗蟲毛蟲羽蟲昆蟲，天仙地仙神仙仙人仙鬼仙可以顧鑒善惡，察聽賢愚。

discern and listen to the wise and the foolish within the four Buddhist continents, mountains, rivers, states, heaven and earth, the naked, the scaled, the haired, the feathered, and the incests, heavenly immortals, earthly immortals, human immortals, ghost immortals.

Here, the categories of fauna and men are based upon a popular late-Ming encyclopedia of exotic lands and peoples--*Luochong lu* 羸蟲錄 (Record of naked creatures) that categorizes all creatures in the world into five groups: the scaled, the feathered, the haired, the shelled, and the naked. This system of classification originated from *The Family Sayings of Confucius* (kongzi jiayu 孔子家語), a controversial book that has been suspected of being a forged canon.¹⁸⁸

While *JW*'s travel narrative resembles *Luochong lu* in terms of its dispersive and all-inclusive structure, *JW* diverges from the encyclopedia precisely because of its disinterest in the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese peoples and cultures. *JW*'s summary of the existence of the Sino-centric order of the empire is projected in fragments onto a religious world where hierarchy, officialdom, and politics exist, but where it is Buddhism that features the ideological framework of the text. It is precisely

¹⁸⁸ Yuming He, "The Book and the Barbarian in Ming China and Beyond" *Asia Major* (2011: 1) v. 24, 43-85.

this relatively more theological and “abstract” vocabulary that allows *JW* the capability of helping its readers create a fantastic world. It is the transcending of the conventional Sino-centric order that enables *JW* to envision the empire and beyond from the perspective of the storyteller and/or the reader. This is the reader’s pleasure of telling and reading a good story about the world. It is *JW*’s insistence on the pleasure of fantasizing history that de-familiarizes our understanding of the history of Xuanzang’s journey as well as the entire empire related to that history. Therefore, such de-familiarization provides the most fertile ground for artistic creation across different generic species. *JW* does not merely evoke a fad of fantasy fiction or *shenmo xiaoshuo* 神魔小說 (fiction of deities and demons) of its kind, a fiction that continued to fantasize the religious cosmos.¹⁸⁹ It also fostered an importantly new strand of the narrative tradition of travel romance, which is bifurcated from its genre. Romances such as *Flowers in the Mirror* (*Jing Hua Yuan* 鏡花緣), *Humble Words of the Wild Old Man* (*Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言), and *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢) fuse and interconnect the religious universe with those of the domestic, philosophical, philological, and political. Its modern-day adaptations into theater, cinema, and TV dramas are also numerous, sweeping across mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, and North America.¹⁹⁰ The value of *JW*’s magic-travel narrative lies precisely in its adaptability, mobility, and inspiring modality.

¹⁸⁹ The *shenmo xiaoshuo* at least includes *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義, *Nanyou ji* 南遊記, *Dongyou ji* 東遊記, *Tianfei jishi chushen zhuan* 天妃濟世出身傳, *Zhouzao ji* 咒棗記 (1603), *Tieshu ji* 鐵樹記, *Xiyou bu* 西遊補, which lead in the book market from 1595 to 1644.

¹⁹⁰ For instance see Yan Liang’s Ph.D dissertation *When High Culture Embraces the Low: Reading Xiyou ji as Popular Fiction in Chinese Society*, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2008.

JW's interest in making the entire pilgrimage a joke, a result of the author's emphasis on the narrator and the reader's intervention into history, has the tendency to subvert history and fictionalize reality. Thus I would like to suggest that *JW*'s pleasure of telling and reading a travel narrative is derived from the late Ming literati's active practice of reading: that is their interrogative, confirmative, skeptical, and dismissive attitudes towards the new and old information they encountered during their reading. In the following paragraphs, I will try to summarize and analyze various readers' discourses on the new, exotic, and sometimes unbelievable anecdotes, maps, fiction, and myths that they encountered. I hope to elucidate the literati's attitudes, premises, and practices with regard to how they processed information.

For example, take scholar Lang Ying's 朗瑛 speculations on the myth of "barbarian of flying heads" in Southeast Asia that he encounters during his reading:

元詩人陳孚出使安南有紀事之詩曰鼻飲如瓴甌頭飛似轆轤蓋言土人能鼻飲者有頭能夜飛于海食魚曉復歸身者予見羸蟲集中所載老撾國人鼻飲水漿頭飛食魚近汪海雲亦能鼻飲頭飛則怪也昨見星槎勝覽亦言占城國人有頭飛者乃婦人也夜飛食人糞尖知而固封其項或移其身則死矣作書者自雲目擊其事予又考古城正接安南之南而老撾正接安南西北信陳詩之不誣也。

The Yuan dynasty poet Chen Fu went on an embassy to Annam. One of his poems on events includes the lines, "Noses that drink like water jars;/ heads that fly like windlasses." This describes the locals who are able to drink through their noses, and those who have heads that can fly to the sea to eat fish at night, and return to their bodies again at dawn. I saw the account in the Luochong collection which states, "People of the country of Laos drink liquids with their noses; their heads fly and eat fish." In recent times, Wang Haiyun could also drink with his nose. As for flying heads, that is truly strange. Recently I saw that The Spectacle of the Starry Raft also says, "Among the people of the country of Champa, there are those with flying heads—they are women. Their heads fly at night to eat the tips of human excrement. When such persons are discovered, if they have their necks firmly secured, or if the body is moved, they die." The person who composed this book said that he witnessed this himself. I have further investigated the matter,

and found that Champa is adjacent to Annam to the south, and Laos is adjacent to Annam to the northwest. Indeed, Chen's poem was no fabrication.¹⁹¹

The scholar at home takes great pleasure in narrating his encounters with the various records of the peoples from Laos, Champa, and Vietnam. He categorizes and reorganizes them by their common tales about the fetishized and grotesque images of flying heads. He understands these images as geographically determined and calibrates the difference between Chinese and the non-Chinese culture. Thus he believes that Southeast Asia is indeed the land associated with decadent, violent, and cannibalistic bodies. He demonstrates the truthfulness of the strange through demonstrating his erudite bibliographical and cartographical knowledge. Lang Ying's evidential scholarship is the method of Confucian canon exegesis. His reading about "barbarians of flying heads" has defamiliarized his normal routine world of perusing Confucian philosophies and history.

Nonetheless, Xie Zhaozhi's scholarly identity at home connects to his speculation of the geography of Southeast Asia, and concerns his dual pleasure of savoring the taboo and the trivial and his disputing of an imagined official historiographer. For instance, Chen Kan 陳侃, envoy to the Rhykyus and author of the official records of the islands, *Record of Sending Envoys to Rhykyus* (Shi Liuqiu lu 使琉球錄) (1534), details the reason why the information on skeletons caused by human carnage in Rhykyus is wrong.

人亦不見其相殺又何嘗以騶髀為佳哉是誌之所載者皆訛也不特誌書為然杜氏
通典集事淵海羸虫錄星槎勝覽等書凡載琉球事者詢之百無一實若此者何也蓋
琉球不習漢字原無誌書華人未嘗親至其地胡自而得其真也以訛傳訛遂以為誌

¹⁹¹ The translation is derived from He's article with slight modification.

何以信今而傳後故集羣書而訂正之。¹⁹²

People do not see how they kill each other. How could they prefer skeletons? The account that recorded this is all wrong. The accounts that record about Rhykyus in the *Comprehensive Compendium of Du*, *The Ocean of Collected Events*, *The Naked Creatures*, *The Star Raft* are all not true. Why is it like this? It is because Rhykyu people do not learn Chinese and they do not have historiography. Since the Chinese have never been there by themselves, how could they know the truth? This is how accounts were made of falsehood that was based upon falsehood. How could these accounts be believable to nowadays' readers? Therefore, I collected the group of accounts to revise them.

What Chen Zan advocates is “seeing is believing.” Since he has been to the place, he is the most authoritative person to revise the accounts that are based upon second-hand information. His attribution of the lack of historiography for the Ryukyus to their not learning how to write Chinese characters (hanzi 漢字) manifests his fetishization of Chinese scripts in terms of recording *true* history. His role as an editor and reviser of Chinese historical and geographical accounts further strengthens this Chinese-script-centered view even though it means more realistic representations of the Ryukyus for erasing the underlying anxieties of authors and readers alike on the truthfulness of historiography.

Xie Zhaozhi, Lang Ying, and Chen Zan all have their own personal understanding of the accounts they read. The first two scholars' opinions have a tendency to dispute official historiographers such as Chen Zan. Whereas Chen Zan's Sino-centric view is as self- confirming and authoritative as the Chinese script, Xie Zhaozhi's advocacy of *JW* and Lang Ying's pleasure of reading about Southeast Asia are each based upon their own preoccupation with official historiography and the Confucian canon. Thus, their reading of the non-official accounts functions as a detour from their normal scholarly life.

¹⁹² Chen Kan 陳侃, *Shi Liuqiu lu* 使琉球錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

Other kinds of readers will find themselves completely displaced and disoriented by the accounts they do not encounter normally. Their opinions are expressed through intense emotions, usually in the form of outrage. Wei Rui 魏濬, for instance, composed an essay titled “On the Absurd and Demagogic Account of Matteo Ricci” (Lishuo huangtang huoshi pian 利說荒唐惑世篇) to debunk Matteo Ricci’s world map:

利瑪竇以其邪說惑眾，士大夫翕然信之。……所著《坤輿全國》洗洋宵渺，直欺人以其目之所不能見，足之所不能至，無可按驗也。真所謂畫工之畫鬼魅也。……中國當居正中，而圖置稍西，全屬無謂。……焉得謂中國如此蕞爾，而居於圖之近北？其肆無忌若此？！

Matteo Ricci utilized some false teachings to fool people, and scholars unanimously believed him... The map of the world which he made contains elements of the fabulous and mysterious, and is a downright attempt to deceive people on things which they personally cannot go to verify for themselves. This is what they call the painter is painting phantoms. ... China should be positioned right in the middle of the world, but the map positions her a little westwards. It does not care at all [about the principle]. How can it claim that China is so trivial that it is only located in the northern part of the picture? Its making is so devoid of any rule!

Wei Rui disputes the veracity of Matteo Ricci’s world map from the perspective of its improbability--people “personally cannot go to verify for themselves.” He compares charting world geography to painting a ghost. His argument is again “seeing is believing.” How could we test the existence of intangible ghosts and gods? His premise that China should be at the center of the world is not disputable and any opinion to the contrary is deemed by him as false. After all, how could other Chinese prove that China is *not* at the center of the world? Wei Rui will immediately dismiss any evidence as dubious since most Chinese of the period had never been outside of China to prove the theory. Thus Wei Rui’s outrage speaks to a rather contrary kind of reading emotion, opposite to the reading pleasure that Xie Zhaozhi and Chen Lang have experienced. They both enjoy freedom of mind in the sense that they reason, rationalize, and speculate about strange

and indeed “unprovable” accounts through the use of knowledge derived from their Confucian bibliographical and historiographical training. They do not cling to the idea of “seeing is believing” and do not dismiss these exotic and strange accounts as either a joke, an unprovable fabrication, or an absurd painting.

CHAPTER FIVE

JAVA AS THE CENTER: PUN, HISTORICAL DISCOURSE OF ZHENG HE, AND HYBRID ROMANCE *EUNUCH SANBAO'S VOYAGES ON THE INDIAN OCEAN*

Introduction

Chapter five tries to give a broader historical and cultural picture in the late Ming, and positions the hybrid romance *Eunuch Sanbao's Voyages on the Indian Ocean* within the context of the 16th-century historical discourse about Zheng He and Java. I argue that Java may be at the center of the late 16th-century political, cultural, and linguistic discourses about the world. In the chapter, I first talk about the popularity of the idiom “Fury has flown to Java,” that indicate the linguistic currency of Java in the 16th century and a cultural curiosity towards linguistic exoticism. I then propose that the omnipresence of Java in the late Ming is derived from its epistemological reference as a coordinating point for the people to understand the increasingly changing world on the ocean. Java is a source of commercial knowledge to learn about Southeast Asia and a geographical reference to reason that the earth is a globe. And Java is an exemplar of the mid-Ming empire's maritime diplomacy demonstrated by Zheng He's strategies to pacify the Chinese immigrants in Java and Sanfoqi and the Yongle and Hongwu emperors' strategies in dealing with the two incidents of murdered Chinese emissaries in Java. Finally, I analyze the hybrid romance *Eunuch Sanbao*, its image of female warrior Witch Wang from the Country of Bolin, her unjust treatment in the story and her appeal for justice at the denouement of the fiction, to discuss a forming imperialism at work. It is

precisely because of the form of the fiction--the violence as embodied in magical battles--that intrigues the author to reflect upon the antithesis between Confucian diplomatic strategy “cherishing men from afar” and warfare. This is a way for the narrator to put forward a Chinese imperialism through rewriting the history into much more triumphant and violent events.

Java as the Epistemological Reference for Commercial and Scientific Learning in the Late Ming

16th-century Ming China began to resume maritime expansionism. At the beginning of the 16th century after its thirty-year closure owing to the imperial court’s fear of frequent Japanese pirate attacks, *Shibosi* 市舶司, the Bureau of Commerce and Ships, was resumed for one hundred years. The Bureau was in charge of collecting tariffs, exchanging tributes, importing and exporting goods, as well as managing foreign trading affairs.¹⁹³ Albeit closed in the second year of Jiajing 嘉靖 (1522-1566), it was reopened in the Longqing 隆慶 (1567-1572) reign and persisted into the 17th century. The fluctuation of the Ming maritime policies manifests the empire’s continuous awareness of the bustling seas in which transactions and businesses were done with or without the state’s approval. Scholars have argued that China had already been involved in the development of the “modern world system” in the late Ming. With the arrival of the

¹⁹³ In the fourth year of the first Northern Song emperor’s reign (971), shibosi was established in Guangzhou, Mingzhou, and Quanzhou. It was an imperial administrative department that investigated the trading vehicles coming into and going out of the sea ports. The Ming official history writes that, shibosi “is in charge of the affairs of foreign countries’ submitting tributes and trading goods. They differentiate the truth and false of envoys’ forms, forbid foreign trades, levy taxes from private goods, and supervise fair transactions” (掌海外諸番朝貢市易之事。辯其使人表文堪合之真偽，禁通番，征私貨，平交易，閑其出入而慎管穀之). See *Ming shi* 明史, vol. 81. *Shibosi* was first set at Taicang 太倉 and Huangdu 黃渡 in the Jiangsu province, but soon the locations were changed to Ningbo 寧波 which was connected to Japan, Quanzhou 泉州 connected to Ryukyu, and Guangzhou 廣州 connected to Campapura, Siam, and other Southeast Asia countries.

Portuguese and the migrations of Chinese merchants, craftsmen, and mariners to the South China Sea, seaports such as Nagasaki, Kyushu, Taiwan, Macao, Manila, Batavia, Malacca were emerging rapidly.¹⁹⁴

While frequent maritime activities and trans-regional contacts increasingly developed sea routes in the South China Sea, the name of Zhaowa 爪哇 became almost omnipresent in the gazetteers of southeastern coastal ports, commercial sailing guides, and geographical accounts published in the late Ming. It is naturally so because Java was the biggest trading center in Southeast Asia. Thousands of Chinese traded porcelain and silk for spices, gold, silver, horses, and rare beasts at Java as well as at the Spice Islands, Sanfoqi, Sumatra, and Singapore. When Alī Akbar Khīṭā’ī went to China by land in 1506, he knew that Mecca and all the sea ports in the Indian Ocean were connected to Java, and from there ships could cruise to every Chinese port.¹⁹⁵ Java then became a very familiar reference point on the map for authors and readers to orient themselves for newer and stranger locations. Zhang Xie 張燮 in *Dongxi yangkao* 東西洋考 (Record of the Eastern and the Western Oceans) uses Java as the coordination point to gauge the location of Portugal as “south of Java” and compares the new Portuguese cannon as bigger and more powerful than the familiar but less effective Javanese cannon. In his Chinese-language geographical textbook *Kunyu tushuo* 坤輿圖說 (illustrated geography of the world), Belgium Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest (Nan Huai ren 南懷仁) (1623-1688) introduces the existence of the Antarctic Pole by describing its southern border as adjacent to the Strait of Magellan and Java (惟其北邊與爪哇及瑪熱辣泥峽為境也).¹⁹⁶ In the new book on

¹⁹⁴ *Ming dynasty, Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 8. 307.

¹⁹⁵ Ali Akeba’er 阿里阿克巴爾, *Zhongguo jixing* 中國紀行, Chinese translation (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1988) 38.

¹⁹⁶ See Nan Huai ren, *Kunyu tushuo* 坤輿圖說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

accurate calendar calculation *Xinfa suanshu* 新法算書 (New Book on Calendar Mathematics), the narrator introduces the idea that the Earth is round by demonstrating that a lunar eclipse is actually caused by the shadow of the Earth. In explaining why oceanic water, with its transparent quality, also can cast shadow on the Moon, the narrator reasons that it is partly because oceanic islands such as Java and Sumatra, also can cast variegated shadows on the Moon and that one cannot differentiate water and terrain from shadows (則海中有島如爪哇老冷蘇門之等星羅碁布在在有之有則皆能生種種之影則射於月體何處分別是水平是地乎).

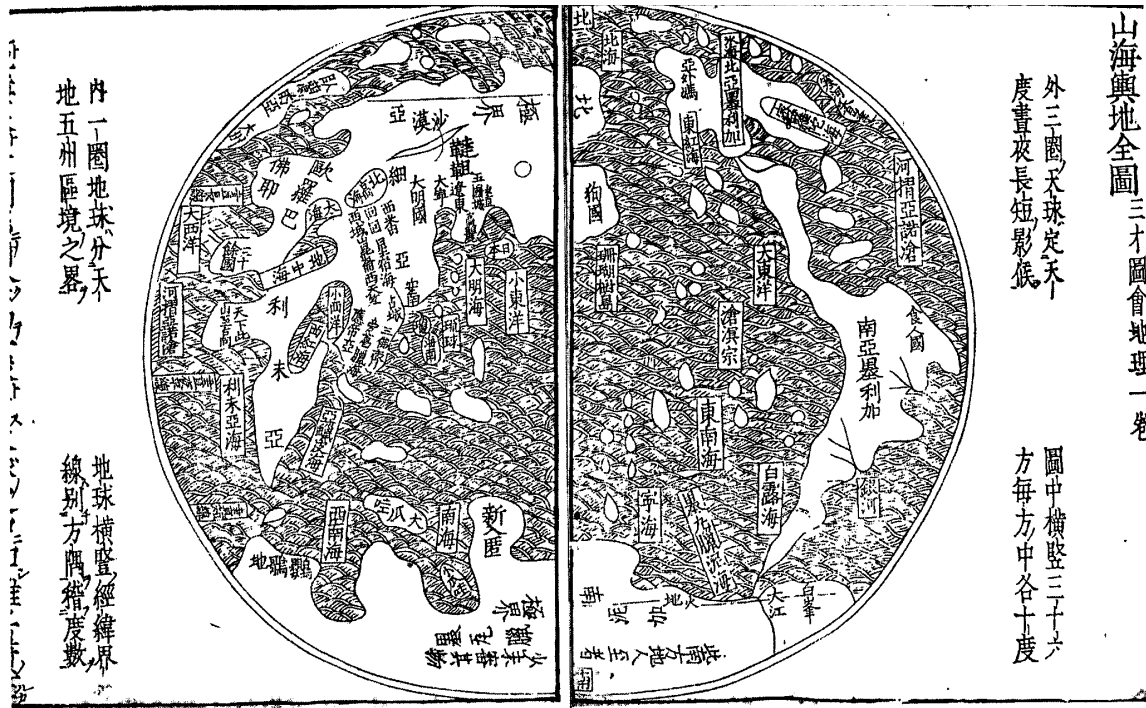


Figure 5.1: the conspicuous position of Java Major on the world map “Shanhai yudi quantu” 山海輿地全圖 in Wang Qi’s 王圻 *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會, a reproduction of a variation of the Nanjing edition of Matteo Ricci’s map, reprinted from J. B. Harley’s *History of Cartography* 1987, v1, 407.

As a result of Java’s prominent role as a representative of the seas, the trading center on the seas, and Southeast Asia, accounts of Java’s exotic products, highly sought

and prized by the Chinese, proliferated as well. Still labeled as “tributes” to China, the names of the exotica that appeared in the late Ming were based upon Ming official historiography. For instance, *the General Gazetteer of Guangdong* published in the Jiajing reign gives a long list of Javanese “tributes:” “pepper, Pilin, Sappanwood, yellow wax, black catechu, gold seeds, black wood, red soil, rosa water, Qinan incense, sandalwood, maxiao incense, shu and jiang incenses” (胡椒華菱蘇木黃蠟烏爹泥金別子烏木番紅土薔薇露奇南香檀香麻蕭香束香降).¹⁹⁷ This list is derived from the *Ming Huidian* 明會典. In *Xiangsheng* 香乘 (vehicles of perfumes), Zhou Jiazhou’s 周嘉胄 (1582-1661) list of Javanese “tribute perfumes” is much longer than those of other places: “the country of Java sent such perfumes as tributes: rosa perfume, qinan incense, sandalwood incense, mateng incense, su incense, jiang incense, wood incense, milk incense, dragon-brain incense, black incense, yellow-mature incense, anxi incense” (瓜哇國貢香有薔薇露琪楠香檀香麻藤香速香降香木香乳香龍腦香烏香黃熟香安息香). This list is based upon *Daming yitong zhi*. Information in official historiography is appropriated as references for commercial and epistemological purposes. By contrast, information about Java and its many Southeast Asian counterparts as well as the rest of the foreign countries recorded in late-Ming daily-used encyclopedias such as *Sancai tuihui* 三才圖會 and *Wuche bajin* 五車拔錦 is more imprecise and less updated in terms of locations and products, and contains more about their everyday customs, sexual fantasies or taboos about them (Fig. 4.3). In all, Java was at the center of the late Ming scientific and commercial exploration of the world as an epistemological reference or a coordination point.

¹⁹⁷ Zhou Jiazhou 周嘉胄, *Xiang sheng* 香乘 (China: Dingzu zhai, 1841).

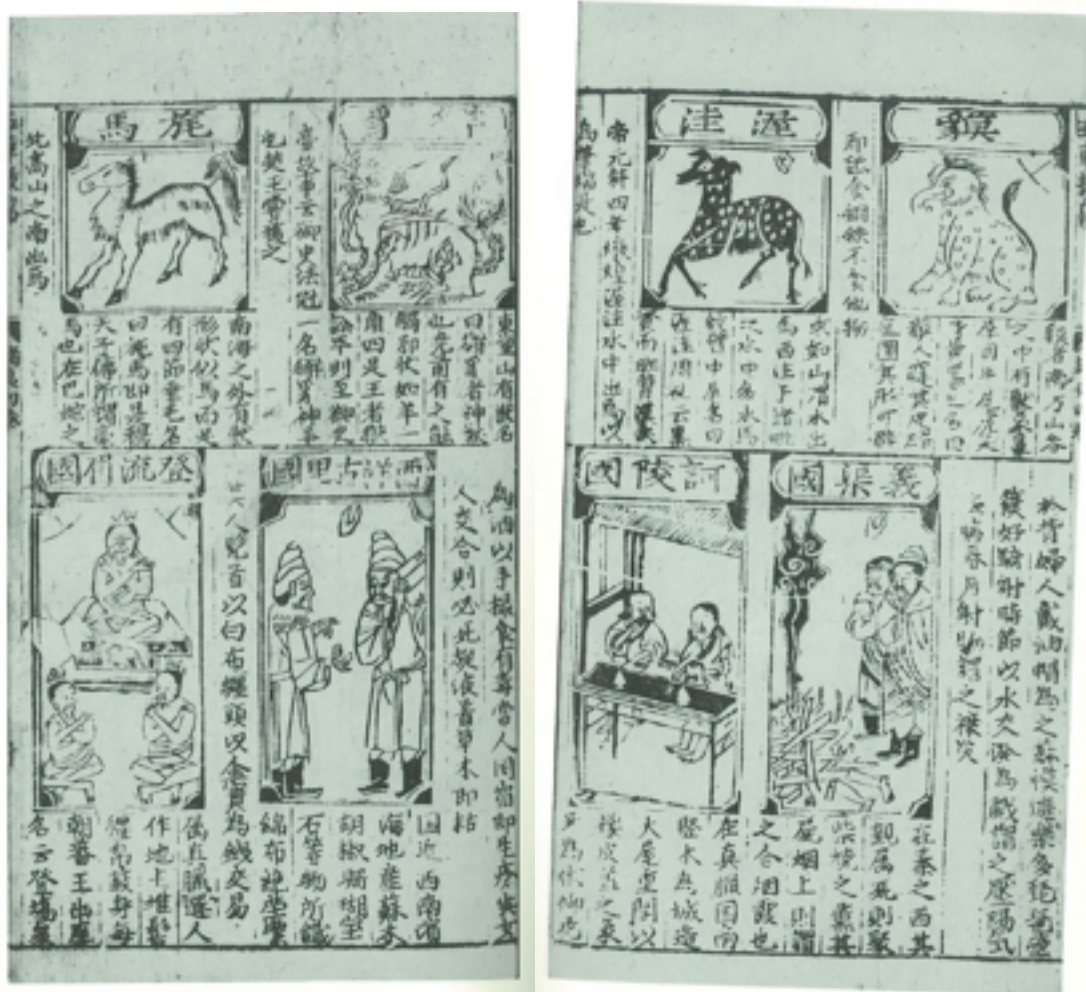


Figure 5.2: the country of Helin represented by the graphic picture second to the left in the lower register with a brief description: “to the south of the country of Cambodia. People there erect wood to make city walls, use rubber to build big houses. They use ivory to make beds, and brew alcohol from coconut flowers. They eat by hands. They are poisonous. If we live with them, we will get sores. If we mate with their women, we are bound to die. Their saliva will make vegetations wither. (*Wuche bajin* 五車拔錦, vol. 4, in *Mingdai tongsu riyong leishu jikan* 明代通俗日用類書集刊 (Chongqing: Xinan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2012) 204-205.

“Fury Flying to Java”

But most interestingly, aside from the currency of Java in the treaties of pragmatic knowledge, the name of Java assumes currency in the linguistic and cultural center of the Chinese elite--an idiom that entails the name of Java circulated in prominent fictional works. *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin) and *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (Plum in the

Golden Vase) both describe a local encounter: one day, a young wife is raising the door curtain of her house in the Qinghe county in Shandong province. Fortuitously, she drops the curtain pole on a passer-by who is at first vexed but then is exhilarated upon glimpsing her pretty face. They write, “that anger has straightly drilled into the country of Java” 那怒氣直鑽過爪哇國去了。¹⁹⁸ The vernacular story “Jin Hailing zongyu wangshen” 金海陵縱慾亡身 (Jurchen King Hailing lost his life for sexual indulgence) in Feng Menglong’s *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 (Eternal Words to Awaken the World) and the *Sansui pingyao zhuan* 三遂平妖傳 (Romance of Conquering Demons), the same Java idiom appears in a similar scenario about the exhilarated state of a man encountering a beauty at her gate.

In the idiom, the man’s impulsive emotional shift is depicted at the level of the narrative language in the form of a story. His anger is personified as a subject traveling to its indissoluble destiny Zhaowa 爪哇, which is a pun: Zhaowa 爪哇 is the Chinese transliteration of the word Java and the wa 哇 with the mouth radical is replaced with the wa 窪 with the water radical and the roof radical. This character means a puddle. This mini story is not part of the main story, yet it contributes to the pivotal point of the whole narrative. The anger disappears while lust arises, giving momentum of the narrative about the man’s journeying into the realm of sexual transgression.

The Java idiom manifests the late Ming cult of *qing* 情 (feelings, sensibility). Anger and lust as well as money and wine are the four metonymic manifestations of the late Ming concept of *qing*. *Qing* is an active mind as opposed to a tranquil mind, *xing* 性,

¹⁹⁸ See Shi Nai’an 施耐庵, *Guben shuihu zhuan* 古本水滸傳 (Shijia zhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1985), and *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 (Xianggang: Xianggang wenhai chubanshe, 1963).

which means nature and impartial reason.¹⁹⁹ The anger is focused as a subject personified as a traveler. Thus for a moment, the animated picture makes the reader believe in a different ontological dimension of the anger, and such make-believe effect creates the atmosphere of comicality at the extra-diegetic narrative level even though at the conceptual level, it is in the same category with lust depicted at the diegetic narrative level.

Such a paradoxical make-believe effect is further strengthened by the pun about Java. If a pun is what Aristotle identifies as a device that “astonishes, for it says something other [than what it seemed to say]”, then Java and a puddle originally two different categories of signs, are related simply because of homonymy. It is then assumed that the concept of a puddle and the concept of Java are two opposite things in terms of space location. Whereas a water margin could be just as close as besides the man or could be anywhere, and any two puddles could be identical, Java is uniquely remote, as far as the moon. On the other hand, the pun pretends to mean that Java is perhaps a country that has many ponds and lakes, or a country floating in the ocean, or simply just a deep watery pit. Further, the image of water is not irrelevant to the space of mind to the Neo-Confucianist. Still water is the metaphor for human nature; flowing water means feelings, and tides are desire. All these metaphors related to Java seem to suggest that the idea of Java remains elusive: it is hard to determine whether it is an abstract space of mind or that very oceanic country. The point of this verbal game concerns precisely whether Java could be located accurately and identified in the mind of the reader. If Java is only imagined as any far-flung island, then the effect of astonishment by replacing *wa* 窪 with

¹⁹⁹ The *Book of Rites* writes: “What is meant by human *qing*? Pleasure, anger, sadness, fear, love, hate, and *yu*.” These seven, men are capable of without having learned them.” “One’s inborn nature is the consequence of Heaven; *qing* is the substance of nature; *yu* is the response of *qing*. To seek what *yu* regards as attainable is that which *qing* cannot avoid” 性者，天之就也，情者，性之質也；欲者，情之應也。以所欲為可得而求之，情之所必不可免也。

wa 哇 would be much mitigated. It is this difficulty to really pinpoint where Java is that entices the reader's imagination.

In the late Ming, most Chinese did not mix with Javanese and had never been to Java, and thus they could be totally ignorant of either the languages the peoples from Java spoke, or of the existence of the loanword *Zhaowa* itself. What the idiom shows, however, is that the late Ming elite, perhaps different from most of the Chinese in the late Ming, were seeking for linguistic surprise, their cultural curiosity for exoticism. Such appetite for linguistic exoticism at once subverts and disguises the politics of naming: the very sensate flare that “*Zhaowa*” evinces is tainted already with the politics of Chinese naming of foreign countries and foreign people, and the idiom's verbal game seems to have nullified the politics of naming. Thus, before we make sense of the emergence of the idiom, we should first know in what historical and political context the Chinese word *Zhaowa* came into being by briefly reviewing the history of the name Java in China, and the rhetoric employed in Chinese historiography and cartography to describe Java and Javanese.

Language and Rhetoric Used to Designate Java and Javanese in Imperial China

Java was called *Yediao* 葉調 (*jap deu*)²⁰⁰ in the Eastern Han (25-220AD) and named *Shepo* 闍婆 (*dźja bwâ*) in the Tang (618-907). Unlike its precursors, *Zhaowa* (*tɕau^B ɣwai^(C)*) coined in the Yuan (1271-1368), with its literary meaning “claws and screams,” glistens with a dense colloquial and comical aura. *Yediao* probably is transliterated from the vernacular Indonesian dialect Prakrit word “*Iabadiu*,” meaning

²⁰⁰ I thank Jonathan Smith for his help with identifying the accurate pronunciations of the terms in ancient and premodern vernacular Chinese.

“Island of Barley,”²⁰¹ though the location of Iabadiu remains debatable, as proven by the transliterated syllable “deu” corresponding to the original sound “diu.”²⁰² But the character 調 that denotes Confucian harmonic melody for acculturation is tinted with literary disposition.

In the *Old Tang History* (jiu tangshu 舊唐書), Java’s toponym is the semi-transliterate word Heling 訶陵 (hai lín). Ling reveals an intent to incorporate the idea of an island into the Sinophone naming system since *ling* denotes hills and mounds, appropriate for the tropical island. The original word is Kling or Kalinga which could be either on Java island or next to Vietnam. In the *New Tang History*, however, Shepo 闍婆 was used, showing the influence of Buddhist translation, suggesting the source language could be Sanskrit. The character 闍 indicates that the word is transliterated from the first two syllables of the Sanskrit name “Yavadvipa” since the character is employed specifically by Buddhist scripture translators to represent a particular pronunciation “dja-” to designate the Sanskrit syllable “ca,” a palatal, comparing roughly to Mandarin j-sound.²⁰³ The “b” consonant, however, probably reflects that Sanskrit “v” designating

²⁰¹ While diu here means “island,” Iaba means barley. The Sanskrit equivalent name is Yava divpa; Yava as barley; divpa as island. However, it is questionable whether “Yava” really means barley or some cereal more congenial to the latitude of Java. The concept of corn, for instance, in different places means differently. Moreover, it is equally possible that this name either Iaba or Yava was an attempt to give an Indian meaning to some aboriginal name of similar sound. Waruno Mahdi has outlined a case for linking the transmission of sorghum into Southeast Asia ca. 1000-600 BCE, taking in the process the Sanskrit name for barley, but using it as a way of describing grain in general at the expense of original Austronesian forms for cereals such as foxglove millet. Also, “Yava” was known in the vernacular of its inhabitants as Yaba during the earliest period of Indianization. For more information, see Michael Laffan, “Finding Java: Muslim nomenclature of insular Southeast Asia from Srivijaya to Snouck Hurgronje, *Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series*, No. 52. Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2005.

²⁰² See Grecian geographer Ptolemy’s entry on Java in his dictionary.

²⁰³ The Buddhist terms that contain 闍 are: sheli 闍梨 meaning guifan shi 軌範師 or zhenghang 正行, an honorific address to a respectful monk or teacher. This sound corresponds to the foreignness of the Sanskrit word Acarya’s “ca”. We don’t know since when this word was used to pronounce as she, but some scholars say that this word is chosen because it is rare so that it could prevent the reader from spontaneously deducting the conventional meaning from a familiar word.

both the consonant “b” and “v”. By deduction, the religious formality shown in Shepo indicates that the transliterated word from Sanskrit probably was coined for bureaucratic purposes such as court-to-court diplomacy. Thus, presumably it is originated in the capitals of Java and Tang China, far away from the seaports where sailors and merchants gathered and worked.²⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Zhaowa is configured with a completely different linguistic contour. It derives graphically from an earlier version of the name, Guawa 瓜哇-- onomatopoeia of frogs’ croaking-- equally unbecoming to designate a place. Peculiarly, the emergence of “Zhaowa” was concomitant with the Mongol Yuan empire’s military conquests and commercial exchanges in Java. This can be discerned in Wang Dayuan 汪大淵 (1311-1350)’s *Daoyi zhilue* 島夷志略 (Concise Records of Barbarian Islands) written during the Yuan which includes both the old parlance relating to Shepo and new passages in the Yuan era. In this new loanword, “w” wa substitutes for “b.” The change of the toponym into Jawa also is reflected in the Islamic geographical treaties such as Mu’jam al-buldan (c. early 13th century) and Tarikh almustabsir (c.1228). This has to do with the incoming Muslims who in the 14th century used Jawa to designate both Sumatra, Java, and Jawi.

In terms of rhetoric schemata, there were two sets of languages used to depict Java and Javanese in Chinese historiography. In *Old Tang History*, the first rhetoric is to describe it as an exotic far-flung island in the midst of the ocean. In the narrative, the Javanese society is romanticized and exoticized with details such as the king’s ivory bed and giant coconut flowers for brewing intoxicating alcohol. Along with the hundreds of

²⁰⁴ While how these sea peoples called the island, or the indigenous name has remained an inquiry for scholars, Mahdi argues that Malay-speaking inhabitants called it Jawa.

oceanic kingdoms, Java is situated at the edge of the world. “Next to Java is the legendary kingdom of women, and further to the lower east is where the weily is, and if one goes further, it is no longer the human world” (水势渐低，女人国在焉。愈东则尾闾之所泄，非复人世). This rhetoric has to do with the Taoist thought that associated the remote and the foreign with nature and immortality, but the Javanese society was by no means primitive. Unlike some societies such as that of Taiwan where the traveler was marveled at how indigenous people were still using knotted strings for calculations and the lack of a writing system, the Javanese society is depicted as having developed their own language and calendar system, even though they ate with their hands, and used no spoons or chopsticks.

This rhetoric then became bifurcated in the Yuan as seen in Wang Dayuan’s travelogue. Java is the considered the richest kingdom among the eastern foreign countries, but such depiction is endowed with a utopian notion as summarized by the popular idiom “taiping Shepo” 太平閼婆 (peaceful Java). Wang Dayuan illustrates this society with conventional vocabulary depicting the Chinese utopia, the Peach Blossom Spring: Java’s soil is fecund, the ground is leveled and vast, customs are simple, people are honest, and grains are plentiful. No one steals. This depiction not only portrays the society as a timeless utopia, but also conveys the rhetoric of primitivism which seems to perceive the world less as a utopia than as the primitive earth. The Javanese society is depicted as a society of gender inversion. In some island societies, women did take up leadership roles, this reinforced the common Chinese myth that stereotypes southern peoples (i.e., the Miao, the Lao, natives of Siam, Taiwan, and oceanic islanders) as hyper-feminine peoples as opposed to the hyper-masculine people in the north (i.e., Mongols

and Jurchens). The South was associated with sensuality, languor, literary refinement, femininity, and female promiscuity.²⁰⁵ Only women could be appointed as chieftains. Every man tied up his hair into a cone-shaped bun wrapped with cloth; only the chieftain could let her long hair down (159).

Wang Dayuan's description of Shepo turns the exotic utopia into a primitive earth under the colonial lens. The rhetoric of primitivism legitimizes the Mongols' colonizing or civilizing project on the island. Wang Dayuan explains how Yuan's salt and penalty laws and the bureaucratic offices were established in Java after Yuan's battles with the Javanese, but his depictions ignore the facts of Yuan's defeats in Java. While the results of wars are the a major concern in historiography, Wang Dayuan's travelogue shows an expansionist empire unaffected by military frustrations, demonstrating that the travelogue as a genre only focuses on the local region as the subject of narration. Thus local scenarios are the metonymic manifestations of the ideological meaning looming behind the travelogue's narration. This is particularly evinced in the author's gaze at the bizarre cowerie-shell-sized alloy coins of copper, silver, tin, and brass. The Yuan enforced the use of copper coins in Java so that they could be exchanged with Chinese copper money. Although historians indicate that the archipelago alloy coins functioned to supplement the shortage of Chinese copper coins, the adverb *quan* 權 (for the time being) used by Wang Dayuan indicates the imperative of conforming the coins to the Chinese standard. He presupposes a universal model to be imitated by the exotic inferior maritime country.

Overall, the emergence of the name Zhaowa coincided with a new era of Yuan's military frustrations and economic and tributary exchanges between Yuan China and

²⁰⁵ See Emma Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese colonial travel writing and pictures, 1683-1895* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2004) 177.

Java. The Yuan people conceived of Java as a particularly stubborn barbarian place since it was the single island on the Indian Ocean that the Yuan armies could not conquer (du Zhaowa fugu bufu 獨爪哇負固不服). Thus the persistent combat between Yuan China and Java facilitated an influx of Chinese merchants; this nurtured a mixed feeling towards Java: frustration, fear, curiosity, desire for exotic goods and the presumption of Chinese superiority and invincibility.

The rhetoric of “Zhaowa” as barbaric and racially inferior continued in the Ming historiography. In the early Ming, Zhaowa was identified as one of the many *fan* countries beyond the seas (haiwai zhu fanguo 海外諸藩國) as seen in the *Official History of Yuan* (Yuanshi 元史) that was written and compiled in the Hongwu reign of Ming.²⁰⁶ The character *fan* 藩 etymologically related to fan 番 (savages) means hedgerows which positions the kingdom at the edge of the world, not only far removed from the imperial center, but in the Wilderness, a blank and obscure space. The term “beyond the seas” also presupposes the natural boundary of the seas. The *Official History of Yuan* continues to describe the Javanese: “The people of Java look ugly and bizarre. With their language and temperament, they are incapable of communicating with the Chinese” 而其人則醜怪，情性語言與中國不能相通 (Song 2160). The denigration on the Javanese demonstrates the Han Chinese chauvinism. Such sense of Chinese superiority expressed in racialistic terms not only indicates that appearance manifests inferiority, but that there is no necessity and possibility to transform the Javanese people with Confucian culturalism because of their inborn nature, their temperament and language.

²⁰⁶ See Song Lian 宋濂, *Yuanshi* 元史, “Liezhuan di jiushiqi” 列傳第九十七外夷三. 2160.

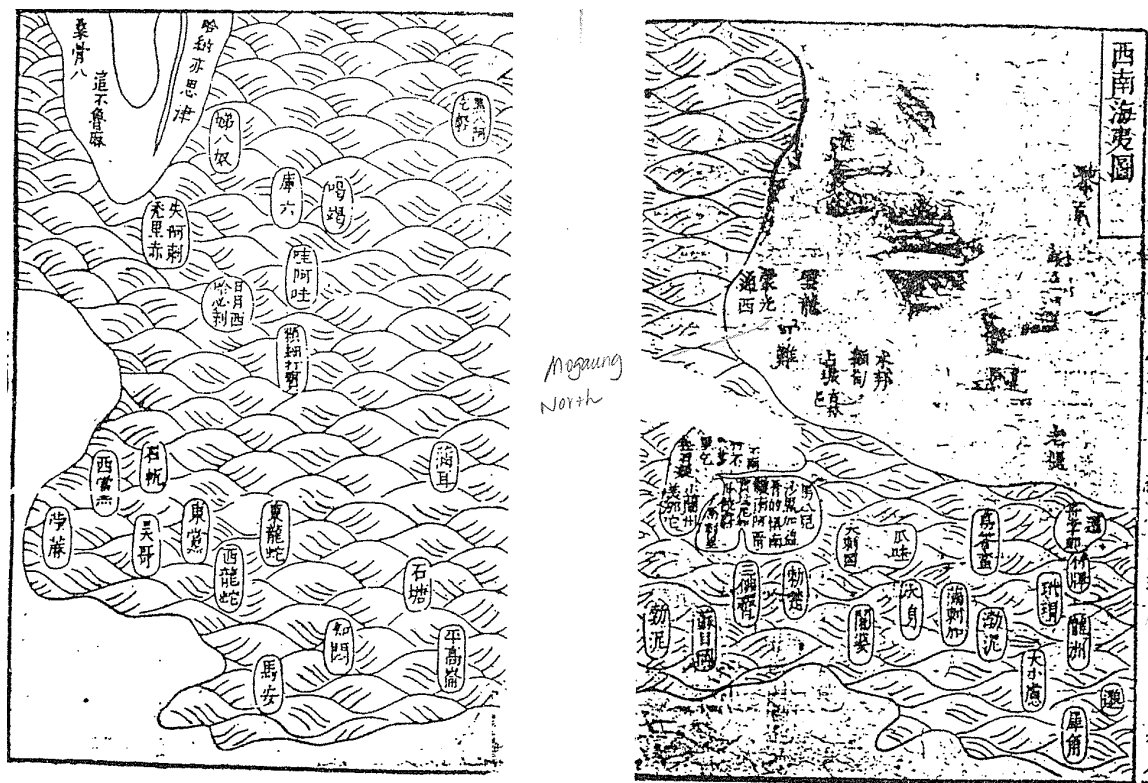


Figure 5.3: “Map of Southwestern Oceanic Barbarian States,” reprinted from *Ditu zongyao* 地圖總要 (Compendium of Maps) (1645).

On Ming maps, Java is a major southern island in the South Sea, grouped with Annam, Champa, Cambodia, Malacca, and Siam under the rubric of “the southern savages” (*nanyi* 南夷) in Luo Hongxian’s 羅洪先 *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas* (*Guang yu tu* 廣宇圖, compiled ca. 1540). The remote foreign island-country with its own four subordinate states, namely Sujidan 蘇吉丹, daban 打板, dawang 打網, diwu 底勿, is identified as “to the west of the Country of Women, east of Srivijaya, north of Arab, and south to Champa” in *The Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming Realm* (*Da Ming yitong zhi* 大明一統志, 1461). Java is not shown on the borders of Chinese imperial maps. Unlike the Manchu state, Korea, Japan, the Ryukyus, Annam, and Siam which are shown in *Huayi yitong tu* 華夷一統圖 as adjacent foreign states along China’s eastern

seaboard, Java is shown in the sea south of Burma and Champa on the *General Map of the Southwestern Oceanic Savages* (Xinan haiyi zongtu 西南海夷總圖) (Fig. 1) in the *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas*. Java's important geopolitical position is visualized on the atlas. Against the background of wavy lines, the characters 大刺由 (Dalayou, Malayu) and 瓜哇 are framed by a blank loop that is two times larger--thus more conspicuous--than most of the island names framed by a narrow rectangle.

Although Java is delineated wrongly as situated to the northeast of Sanfoqi and northwest of Malacca, this imprecision only demonstrates that the locations of Malacca and Srivijaya were less certain than that of Java. While Malacca was known only as a place to the south of Champa in most accounts except in Zheng He's map; Srivijaya where it was depicted in *The Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming Realm* as situated "between Cambodia and Java." The inaccuracy of the map indicates that Java, like Champa, was used as a coordinate point to locate other islands, a process that concerned the East and the West more than the North and the South. Names of the islands are scattered along the coasts, as if they were created as reflection of the land. The rest of the islands fill up the blanks, but the most dense areas are along the coasts.

In his travelogue *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽, Zheng He's Muslim translator Ma Huan 馬歡, who accompanied him on his maritime adventures in the Indian Ocean, described the area of Java by geographical division, customs, casts, language, productions, and penalty system. The time is represented as the traveler's multiple visits there, disregarding the larger historical time--China's diplomatic relationship with Java and the Majapahit dynasty's own reigns. This narrative focus on the locale is the same as Wang Dayuan's account which dismisses Yuan's military battles related to Java. Yet whereas Wang Dayuan feminizes the southern barbarians, Ma Huan delivers a strong

sense of fear towards the Javanese indigenes by using the trope of metonymy to depict their ferocious nature:

國王之絆，髻頭或帶金葉花冠，身無衣袍，下圍絲嵌手巾一二條，再用錦綺或紵絲纏之於腰，名曰壓腰。插一兩把短刀，名不刺頭，...國人男婦皆惜其頭，若人以手觸摸其頭，或買賣之際錢物不明，或酒醉顛狂，言語爭競，便拔此刀刺之，強者為勝。若戳死人，其人逃避三日而出，則不償命。若當時捉住，隨亦戳死。國無鞭笞之刑，事無大小，即用細藤背縛兩手，擁行數步，則將不刺頭於罪人腰眼或軟肋一二刺即死。其國風土無日不殺人，甚可畏也。

The men trust a pu-la'tou into the waist; from little boys of three years to old men of a hundred years, they all have these knives, which are all made of steel, with most intricate patterns drawn in very delicate lines; for the handles they use gold or rhinoceros' horn or elephants teeth, engraved with representations of human forms or devils' faces, the craftsmanship being very fine and skillful. ... The people of the country, both men and women, are all particular about their heads; if a man touches their head with his hand, or if there is a misunderstanding about money at a sale, or a battle of words when they are crazy with drunkenness, they at once pull out these knives and stab [each other]. He who is stronger prevails. When [one] man is stabbed to death, if the [other] man runs away and conceals himself for three days before emerging, then he does not forfeit his life; [but] if he is seized at the very moment [of the stabbing], he too is instantly stabbed to death.

Bulatou, literally, “no cut head” is the transliteration of the Javanese beladau, which means that the signified is the knife rather than the head. It is this Chinese signifier tou 頭 (head), however, that connects such a knife to the Javanese cultural taboo and in turn to the social violence in Java in general. While the signified (the knife) thus becomes the signifier of the violence latent in the culture, centering around the loanword rather than the idea of that word, Ma Huan glosses over the concept of the barbarian Javanese, their bloodthirsty nature and the purportedly underdeveloped judicial culture. In effect, the narrator's tremendous fear of violence is associated with the murder of the Chinese envoys on the island as detailed in the *Ming shilu* 明實錄. The rhetoric utilizes the iconic

object in Javanese culture to represent metonymically the ferocious nature of the indigenes.

Ma Huan further attributes the ferociousness of the Javanese to their racial origin, their mythological and legendary history that details a fight against “bloodthirsty ghosts.”

舊傳鬼子魔王青面紅身赤髮，正於此地與一罔象相合，而生子百餘，常啖血為食，人多被食。忽一日雷震石裂，中坐一人，眾稱異之，遂推為王。即令精兵驅逐罔象等眾而不為害，後復生齒而安焉。所以至今人好兇強。

The old saying has it that the ghost demon with a blue face, red body, and scarlet hair copulated with an indigene ghost and produced a hundred some children who lived by drinking blood. Most of the men were eaten because of this. Suddenly one day, a thunder rock was broken wherein a person sit there. the crowd was mazed by this, then voted him the king. He then led the selected soldiers to expel the ghost and his children from making harm to the local. Since then, the people could live peacefully. This is why the people today are ferocious.

This narrative is both about the origin of the Javanese and of their nature. The thunder rock might be a cosmic egg said to be in the abdomen of Ganesh, the elephant-headed God. And a Brahma is said to have been hatched from the cosmic egg. But Ma Huan’s narrative framework of the Javanese people’s origin is in fact derived from Chinese ethnical tradition. The “indigenous ghost” called *wangxiang* 罔象 in Chinese is an animal in Chinese mythology that eats the liver and the brain of a corpse buried in a tomb. With his black face and red hair, the king of ghosts symbolizes the inferiority of a species by nature, and such inferiority corresponds to the most remote part of the world where the Javanese live. Similarly, the vocabulary of “drinking blood” and “eating humans,” though has been used commonly to describe demons rather than humans, and parallels and replaces the commonplace vocabulary of describing barbarians, *rumao yingxue* 茹毛飲血 (wearing furs and drinking blood). In this narrative framework, the distinct feature of Java is its “ghostliness.” It is called the “country of ghosts:” the indigenes believe in the

religion of “ghosts;” the indigenes have black skin, an ape-shaped head, and bare feet; and their origin myth is related to a demon, king of “ghosts.”

Reading the Chinese history of naming Java, we see how the morphological aspects of the Chinese loanwords are not just transcriptions of sounds, but are influenced by specific rhetorical, ritual, and political contexts, be it the court-to-court diplomacy, religious connotation, from Sanskrit, or language from other sources related to commerce and war.

Java as an Exemplar of Ming China’s Maritime Diplomacy: Late Ming Narratives of Zheng He’s Maritime Expeditions

In the 16th-century, Ming China also witnessed the proliferation of literati’s compilation and composition on China’s diplomatic history that was based upon archives, historiographies, and geographical accounts. In addition to Java’s customs, cultures, and products, these accounts also discussed China’s diplomatic history with Java from the Tang through the mid-Ming. In particular, the history of Zheng He’s visits to Java and Sanfoqi is summarized in travelogues by Wang Dayuan, Ma Huan, and Fei Xin as well as other historiographies. Following I will analyze three kinds of narratives of early Ming’s diplomatic history with Java and Zheng He’s voyages related to Java.

In 1583 ACE, the guiwei 癸未 year of Wanli 萬曆 reign, Yan Congjian 嚴從簡, a former emissary candidate at the Bureau of Envoys ministered by the Department of Rites published his version of the diplomatic history of China titled *shuyu zhouzi lu* 殊域周恣錄 (*Records of the Surrounding Strange Realms*).²⁰⁷ In the preface, his uncle Yan Qing 嚴清 expounds on how Japanese and Tartars emerged as the festering sores (xianjie

²⁰⁷ The edition I use is: Yan Congjian 嚴從簡, *Shuyu zhouzi lu* 殊域周恣錄, *Zhongwai jiaotong shi ji congkan* 中外交通史集叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000).

zhiyang 織芥之恙) of the Ming empire, the curing of which lay in simulating and appropriating exemplary diplomatic strategies in history. Zheng He annihilated the traitors in *Sanfoqi* 三佛齊, a territory controlled by Java. In Yan Qing's opinion, this demonstrated the advantages of "synthesizing" (jiaoxiang weiyong 交相為用) diplomatic approaches, i.e., "proclamations" (wengao 文告) and "military threats" (weirang 威攘), in disposing of the foreign relation affairs with Japanese and Tartars. Yet Yan Qing's strategy did not have a concrete construction or materialization, and thus the state or the empire is an abstract idea. Yan Congjian on the other hand emphasizes the agency of diplomats by clarifying that the diplomats in history exemplify the idealistic statesmen of the empire by their eloquent speech and ritualistic actions. It is both incumbent and urgent to assume the duty of ambassadorship instead of military service to maintain the Sino-centric order: "the abiding sanctity of China and perennial submissiveness of foreign countries" (zhongguo changzu siyi yongshun 中國常尊四夷永順) (Yan 4).

The sense of imperative Yan Congjian felt to resume the vitality of diplomatic strategies derived from his uneasiness at the unfathomable psychology of "cunning and erratic" (jiaozha duoduan 狡詐多端) barbarians (4). Perceiving that the world in his day is unified (chesu huntong 車書混同), he proposed that ways for the Chinese to communicate with foreigners must be handled meticulously given that Tamerlane used to imprison the emissary Fu'an 傅安 who had been sent by the Hongwu emperor and the Korean king used to bribe ambassador Qishun 祁順 with gold. Thus by subscribing agency to diplomats, Yan Congjian pointed out that the tribute system must be sustained by a sophisticated Confucian's sensibility to foreigners' connotations and emotions (cise 辭色), and capability to act and determine accordingly, along with his integrity, flexibility, and intelligence. All these serve to fulfill the "weighty duty" for the son of

Heaven (*yi wanquan tianzi zhi weizhong* 以萬全天子之委重). “Weighty duty” or *weizhong* denotes the sense of reciprocity of love between the Confucian official and the ruler. The empire was sustained by the simultaneous affirmation of the diplomats’ loyalty to the emperor and his benevolence to his diplomatic subjects.

Since Yan Congjian honors an apotheosis to “utter heavenly words” (*kouxian tianyu* 口銜天語) (4) for envoys, what distinguishes his narrative from others is the prowess immanent in the imperial edicts in the narration, edicts that were to be delivered and vocalized by Ming envoys as their missions. Yan Congjian begins the recounting of the Ming-Japanese relationship with a diplomatic accident in the Hongwu reign. In 1370, Xilibada 昔里八達, king of Sanfoqi 三佛齊, a subordinating kingdom of Java, dispatched a tributary envoy to the Hongwu emperor who in turn appointed Xilibada as the Javanese king. Six years later, king of Java Badanabanawu 八達那巴那務 outraged at the fact that Sanfoqi was decreed as an equal state to Java, murdered a Chinese ambassador in Java as revenge. But in 1380, without any request, he volunteered to send a diplomat to China with a gold-leaf memorial and 300 black slaves to atone for the dead envoy. The emperor returned the diplomat with an edict which is copied down in the account:

朕君主華夷，按虛之道，遠邇無間。爾邦僻居海島，頃常遣使中國，雖去修貢實則慕利。朕皆推誠以禮待焉。前者三佛齊國王遣使奉表來請印綬朕嘉其慕義，遣使賜之，所以懷柔遠人。奈何設為奸計，誘使者而殺害之？豈爾低險遠故敢肆侮如是與？... 幹怒中國，則可以守富貴。其或不然，自致殃咎，悔將何及！(292)

I rule the Chinese and the yi and in my arrangements I do not distinguish between those near and those far away. Your land is isolated on an island in the ocean and recently you have frequently sent envoys to China. Even though you claimed to be offering tribute, but were in fact seeking profit, I promoted loyalty by receiving the envoys with appropriate ritual. Previously, the envoy sent by the king of the country of San-fo-qi presented a memorial and requested a seal and tassels. I was pleased with their admiration for righteousness and then sent an envoy to confer these upon him, in order to manifest my concern for people in the distance. Who would have expected a villainous plot by which the envoy was enticed away and killed? How could you, relying on your

location in a dangerous and distant place, dare to act in such a reckless and insulting manner?If you assuage China's rage, then you will be able to protect your riches. If not, you will invite annihilation upon yourself and regret will be of no use.

What is emphasized in the imperial edict is the dichotomy of Confucian moralism and barbarian materialism that is enunciated in the majestic tone of the Son of Heaven.

Barbarians are "seeking profit" in the tributary system while China maintains it for loyalty and appropriate rites. Further, surmising the full reach of the Hongwu emperor's benevolence throughout the cosmos, the common Confucian strategy of treating barbarians, *huairou yuanren* 懷柔遠人, or "cherishing men from afar" manifests the claimed Confucian moralism. Such policy is grounded on the emperor's fear of excessive caring of distant savages and his ambition of expanding the tributary system. The final sentence is nearly a warning of the destructive potency of the imperial laws.

Then Yan Congjian's narrative continues:

三十年，上以爪哇所屬三佛齊國挾詐，阻絕商旅。禮部移文暹羅轉達其國諭之。後其國分為東西 (292-293).

In the thirtieth year, the emperor considering that Java's subordinating state Sanfoqi deceitfully retained [Chinese envoys] blocked its commerce and travels [with China]. The Department of Rites took a detour to deliver official documents to Java via Siam. Later, the kingdom of Java was separated into East and West Java.

Even though the facts are arranged only chronologically without a supposedly coherent narration, the tendency to leave no stone unturned after the insertion of the imperial edict perhaps gains its momentum from it. While the gold-leaf memorial and the 300 black slaves cannot compensate for the murdered deputy, the commercial and political paralysis of Java, which in logic and in history was unlikely since it took place 19 years after, somehow manifests the ideal and ideological laws of a dominating empire at work.

Yan Congjian's account on Sanfoqi corroborates my suspicion that the imperial edict influenced the narrative of Java. The account on Sanfoqi tells that the obstruction was caused by Java's political coercion on Sanfoqi to release the Chinese envoys

suspiciously retained after the incident of the Hu Weiyong 胡惟庸 conspiracy. The detour of the delivery of the document was then intended to protect intelligence from being intercepted.

Another similar but more compelling incident ensues but it was handled by the Yongle emperor with a different tactic. In 1406, the East Java king was slain by the West Java king in scathing combat. At the same time, the West Java king ordered a slaughter of 170 Chinese emissaries “passing by” (zhouguo 舟過) East Java. Yongle emperor “gravely criticized” (qieze 切責) the West Java king who in the next year admitted his guilt, promised 60,000 ounces of gold for redemption, and pledged to reestablish the crown prince of the East Java king as its king. Yongle consented. But the actual gold paid only amounted to 10,000 ounces and the crown prince was never made the king. The Department of Rites judged this as deserving a sanctioned punishment (fasi zhizhi 法司治之). The emperor, however, not only exempted him from the fines by virtue of his own sense of guilt, but six years later issued an edict to appease the worried West King in regard to Old Port 舊港 (previously Sanfoqi) that was coveted by Malacca.

前內官吳賓等還言，王恭事朝廷，禮待敕使，有加無替。比聞王以滿刺加國索舊港之地而懷疑懼。朕推誠待人，若果許之，必有敕諭。今既無朝廷敕書，王何疑焉！下人浮言慎勿聽之。今賜王文綺、紗羅至可領也。(294)

Previously eunuch Wu Bing returned and said that you diligently served the court and treated the envoy even more courteously. I heard that you suspected and feared that I would grant Old Port to Malacca. I treat people with honor. If I indeed permit the matter, there must be my imperial edict. Now since there is no courtly edict, how come you are suspicious? Do not listen to the frivolous words of others. Now please come to receive the patterned silk and brocade I bestow you.

The account continues as:

十三年，西王都馬板更名楊惟西沙，遣使謝恩。十六年，西王遣使獻白鸚鵡。

In the thirteenth year, the western king Dumaban changed his name as Yangwei xisha and dispatched envoys to thank the imperial favor. In the sixteenth year, the western king sent envoys to pay white parrots as tributes.

With the narrator's implication, it is both the secured Old Port and the lightened expiation that impelled the West Java king to change his name to Weiyang Xisha two years later, and he also sent envoys to express his tremendous gratitude. What is reinforced is more Yongle as the charitable ruler than the stern Heavenly Father represented by Hongwu. Yet Yan Congjian's account on Malacca reveals that the Yongle emperor indeed granted Sanfoqi to Malacca while protecting the seaport from Siam's encroachment and conferring numerous entitlements on the descendants of the first Malacca king appointed by Zheng He in 1406. Yan Congjian's narratives shows the prowess of imperial edicts in influencing the sequence of events in the future, and how the emperors manipulated their edicts to achieve diplomatic goals.

Unlike his uncle who advocated the "syncretic approaches" to deal with barbarians by means of both military force and diplomacy, Yan Congjian valued rhetoric and speech in political mediation. He promoted the strategy of Zhao'an 招安 (call for pacification). In the account on Sanfoqi, he compared the maritime merchant Wang Zhi 王直--a Chinese *wokou*-- to the merchant Liang Daoming 梁道明 residing in Safoqi. Whereas the former was caught and decapitated during the piracy elimination campaign, the latter was summoned back to Beijing by the state after being appointed as the Javanese chief of Sanfoqi. Smitten with their different fates, Yan Congjian claimed it was crucial to know which means to choose and which rule to conform to while imputing Wang Zhi's death to his own personal choice.

Yan Congjian's idea of the Chinese empire seems to base upon race because it entails a presumption that all Chinese, regardless wherever they are, are still part of

China. In this sense, the policy of “cherishing men from afar” to him only seems to apply to non-Chinese or non-Chinese states. That is, it remains unclear for Yan Congjian as to how to treat the Chinese diaspora as a community that is different from both Chinese and foreigners. His narration of the capturing and decapitating of the “pirate” leader Chen Zuyi 陳祖義 at Old Port delineated the triumph of annihilating the large-scale Chinese migrants’ resurrection against the Ming. 5,000 people were killed, with 10 ships burnt and 7 captured.²⁰⁸ Yan Congjian wrote that it was this “internal pacification” that convinced the foreign countries to become subordinate to the Ming (諸番聞之皆響服). By this, he again strengthens the age-old point that only through straightening out the internal can the external be at peace.

Further, Old Port was later recognized as the polity but only as a “pacification superintendency” (xuanwei si 宣慰司), a polity that was within the Chinese empire, since the majority of Sanfoqi popularity were regarded as essentially Chinese from Guangdong and Fujian. A Chinese by the name of Shi Jinqing 施進卿 was assigned as the superintendent of Old Port. In conclusion, Yan Congjian’s view of the Chinese empire is constructed from the agency of imperial edicts--by implication, the emperor’s authority--and is based upon a racial notion of Chinese ethnicity as opposed to non-Chinese races.

Literatus He Qiaoyuan’s 何喬遠 (1558-1631) narrative of Sino-Javan history, collected in his chapter on Ming China’s diplomatic history titled *Wangxiang ji* 王享記, one of the 33 chapters of his individualistic and private historiography of Ming dynasty *Mingshan cang* 名山藏 ([the book that should be] hidden underneath the famous

²⁰⁸ Geoff Wade, “The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment,” *JMBRAS*, Vol. LXXVIII Pt. 1, 2005, 37-58.

mountain),²⁰⁹ provides a different conception of the empire. The narrative assumes that the empire is based upon expensive tributary, commercial, and military relations with foreign states. He Qiaoyuan cites Hongwu emperor in the beginning of his preface to *Wangxiang ji*: “a vast territory is not designed for permanent peace; tired people are the origin of social turbulence” 地廣非久安之計, 民勞乃易變之源 (6039), and repeats the words at the end of the preface. Thus, the empire’s frequent tributary and mercantile exchanges with Japanese and Southeast Asians are narrated as exorbitant and unnecessary for they only entice the lust (tan 貪) of barbarians (6041). Further, in his narration of Java, the Javanese are trickery, violent, and deceitful. The Hongwu emperor did not compensate for the death of the Ming envoy in Java by killing the Javanese missionary because he cared for the Javanese envoy out the sense of filial piety: “I wish to imprison you, but I thought about your attachment to your parents, wife, and children. And such feelings are the same between Chinese and foreigners” 欲拘爾使念父母妻子之戀夷夏一也 (6190). After knowing that the Western Javan king only submitted 10,000 ounces of gold instead of 3,000 as promised, the Yongle emperor--very similar to the benevolent Hongwu emperor--said, “it is only meant to let the distant men know they are guilty” and thus he forgave the king without furthering asking about the case” 上曰要使遠人知罪則已赦不問 (6191). Then it narrates that the Western Javan king ate his words of establishing the son of the deceased Eastern Javan king as the ruler and had been deceiving the Yongle emperor for a long time: “The Eastern king had not arrived in China for long. It was because earlier, he was defeated by the Western king who deceivably said would establish his son as the ruler. Since this did not materialize, the Eastern Java

²⁰⁹ The edition I use is He Qiaoyuan’s 何喬遠 *Mingshan cang* 名山藏 (Yangzhou: Jiangsu guanglin guji keyin she, 1993), vol. 8.

stopped coming to China” 而東王竟久不至蓋先是為西王所破詭言欲立其子竟不果而遂滅 (6191). The Javanese are represented as a split, unstable, and conflicted people. At the end of the account, He Qiaoyuan further wrote: “I used to go to Cantonese seaports to ask various merchants about Javanese. They said that the Javanese were poor, alcoholic, materialistic, addicted to drugs and robbery. How could they prosper? The reasons why they are called “ferocious savages” have existed for long” 余嘗至粵下博問諸賈胡謂爪哇窮儉酗酒嗜財好毒劫豈隆窳良悍夷亦有時也 (6192). He Qiaoyuan’s account is characterized by his collection of information from merchants and common people. But his narrative of the mercantile and tributary relations only fortifies China’s centrality in the system.

Luo Yuejiong 羅曰褰 in his well-acclaimed geography account *Xianbin lu* 咸賓錄²¹⁰ published in 1591 revamps the Ming-Japanese incidents in a much more radical tone, very possibly owing to the more rampant Japanese piracy in the 1590s. Luo’s story of the Sino-Japanese incidents is compounded with intensified anxiety over maritime trafficking on the porous borders of the Ming empire. He remarks on the critical moment of Yongle judging and resolving the case of the 170 diseased envoys. The first part remains the same as that of Yan Congjian’s: the demanded 60,000 ounces of gold only resulted in 10,000 being given. But Yongle not only declined the offer and threw away the gold but intimidatingly declared: “Do I need the gold? I only want the distant people to know what fear is” 朕利金耶？令遠人知畏爾 (144). Luo Yuejiong then applauds his maneuvering with high admiration:

昔者郅支，樓蘭，漢諸夷中大國也，邀殺漢使，陳湯傳介子猶擊斬之。今爪哇叢爾小蠻，橫行猖獗，其罪過於郅支，樓蘭遠矣，倘興伐罪，勢如破竹。第帝王

²¹⁰ The edition I use is *Xianbin lu* 咸賓錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983).

一怒，必伏尸流血，故聖祖重行之詔罰以金。尋又卻之曰：”令遠人知畏爾。“君子謂是舉也，德莫厚焉威莫加焉，俾四夷聞知爭向化矣！(148)

In the past, Zhizhi and Loulan were the major barbarian countries of the Han dynasty. After having seduced and murdered the Chinese ambassadors, they were defeated by Chen Tang and Fu Jiezi. Today, Java is only a smallest barbarian state but it acts rampantly and widely. Its crimes far surpassed those of Zhizhi and Loulan. Had the emperor announced a war on such a crime, the speed of eliminating Java would have been as fast as splitting bamboos. Had the emperor become outraged, Java would have been flown with blood and corpses. That is why the divine emperor deliberately issued an edit only to demand golds as fines and later refused to accept, saying “I only hope to intimidate the distant people.” The gentleman says that this is a great deed. How profound was his virtue and how extremely powerful was him? If the barbarians from four directions know about this, they would strive to come for acculturation.

Despite the inherently perversive understanding of the historical incident, the most intriguing part of Luo Yuejiong’s commentary is the use of the subjunctive tense to imagine a sanguinary battle with Java who is berated as “the smallest savage state.” What is even more unusual is the cogency of such violent intimidation on the part of the emperor himself.

The intensification of Japanese piracy in the late Ming is further discussed in his account on Zheng He’s suppression in Sanfoqi. Reiterating his preference for violence, Luo Yuejiong sublimates his anxiety and resentment towards the surging piracy matter into the Javanese narrative space. He observes that most of the Chinese from Guangdong and Guangxi who have fled the foreign islands could lead the barbarians to revolt against Ming, “as demonstrated by the Japanese piracy” (如日本事可概見也) (149). He further opines that since both Chen Zuyi and Shi Jinqing were traitors, why should the former be executed but the latter appointed as the superintendent? Zheng He should have set up a stricter rule by decapitating Shi Jinqing to warn the emerging pirates in the late Ming. For Luo Yuejiong, the empire is maintained through diplomatic coercion, military intervention, and population administration.

In his memorial submitted in 1592, Lin Zhang 林章 persuades the Ming court to dispatch troops to Korea to expel Hideyoshi's armies that have already captured Seoul.

He provides a hierarchy of oceanic states:

海上夷有六十餘種，種大者十數國東為日本朝鮮東南為琉球西南為暹羅浡泥滿刺加南為交趾占城三佛齊真臘爪哇。日本最強暹羅等去之最遠琉球朝鮮最相近而交趾等次之。²¹¹

There are sixty-some kinds of savages on the seas. The powerful races are Japan and Korea in the east, Ryukyu in the southeast, Siam in the southwest, Negara, Melaka, and Vietnam, Campapura, Samboja, Thailand, and Java in the south. Japan is the strongest. Siam and others are the most remote. Ryukyu and Korea are the closest, and Vietnam is second to them.

The word *zhong* 種 (seed, kind) here combines the notion of race with the concept of polity. Java is listed as the most insignificant and remote state. Within this social-political classification, Japan stands on the top, and Java is the lowest of the low. Even though Java no longer had any strategic importance to the late Ming empire as they had to the early and mid Ming empires, narratives of Sino-Javan history in the Hongwu and Yongle reigns as related to the memory of Zheng He's maritime expeditions still rendered the distant tropic of Java as a relevant center of the late Ming public discourses. In the narratives of Yan Congjian, He Qiaoyuan, and Luo Yuejiong, the Sino-Javan history easily can be manipulated through rearranging the sequence of events, projecting the cause and effect of the events, rephrasing the narrative rhetoric and the rhetoric of the emperors, and commenting on the events. These narratives are channeled with the literati's anxieties over the late Ming empire troubled by Japanese piracy and maritime trafficking. Java then became the virtual center in the late Ming for literati to channel their opinions and emotions on Japanese piracy and maritime border issues.

²¹¹ See Lin Zhang 林章, "Powo qianshu 破倭前疏" in *Lin Chuwen shiwen quanji* 林初文詩文全集.

Magical Objects, Demoralized Chinese, Discriminated Javanese: Forming Imperialism in *Eunuch Sanbao's Voyages on the Indian Ocean* and Its Implications to the Future

It is within the above-mentioned historical discourses that Luo Maodeng's 羅懋登²¹² *Sanbao taijian xiyangji tongsu yanyi* 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義 (Eunuch Sanbao's maritime voyages to the western ocean, hereafter *SVW*) came into being. Luo Maodeng as a commissioned editor at the Fuchun tang 富春堂²¹³ on the Three Mountains Street (sanshan jie 三山街) of the Book Quarter in Nanjing was himself also a reader of the many commercialized travelogues, historiographies, and albums readily available to him. For instance, *Yingyai shenglan*, the travelogue that is profusely drawn upon by Luo Maodeng in his fiction had three versions of printed Ming copies. An edition appeared in a collection called *Jilu huibian* 紀錄彙編 (compendium of records) published by Shen Jiefu 沈節甫 in 1617, and a *rifacimento* of *Yingya shenglan* composed by Zhang Sheng 張升 was published by his son in 1522. The abrasive omissions, abridgments, revisions and mistakes made on each version indicate that the text might well be sold for commercial purpose and adapted by different groups of literati for various purposes.²¹⁴

²¹² Luo Maodeng is a commissioned editor at Fuchun tang. He edited an encyclopedia on Soushen ji 搜神記, composed a chuanqi play called Xiangshan ji 香山記, and annotated such plays as *Xixiang ji* 西廂記, *Baiyue ting* 拜月亭, and *Pipa ji* 琵琶記. See the preface to *Sanbao taijian xiyangji tongsu yanyi* 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985) 6.

²¹³ Fuchun tang operated by the members of the Tang family was famous for producing cheap editions of *chuanqi* plays, Confucian classics, verses, medicines, and religious encyclopedias. For a survey about the commercial publishing on Three Mountains Street, see Lucille Chia's article "Of Three Mountains Street: the commercial publishers of Ming Nanjing" in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* edited by Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

²¹⁴ For a study on the three versions (Version C, Version S, and Version K) of *Yingyai shenglan*, see section "Extant versions of the 'Ying-yai sheng-lan'" in J. V. G. Mills's introduction to Ma Huan's *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores" translated by Feng Ch'eng-Chun (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1970) Extra Series No. XLII. 37-44.

Yet if the pun on Java simply manifests a sense of linguistic surprise and cultural exoticism, and if the historiographical narratives manipulate the Sino-Javan history in various narrative strategies, it is the mechanism of fictional narrative that further envisions history in a more subversive, radical, but *retrospective* manner. *SVW* poses the question of how fictional genre assimilates history and responds to history. That is, what is the difference of telling the Sino-Javan history or the history of Zheng He's maritime voyages in the form of a fiction? What quality of this history can be written into fiction? What has to be left out? For Yan Congjian, the idea of empire is sustained by the emperor's authority through imperial edicts; for He Qiaoyuan, it is the tribute system that constructs the empire; for Luo Yuejiong, military force and rhetoric coercion. All their imaginations convey a sense of universalism, *wuwai* 無外 or without borders. Within the genre of magic-travel romance as exemplified by *JW*, however, this universalism is Buddhism, or the so-called "unity of three teachings." Such religious universalism is materialized in *JW*'s storyline of a Buddhist community that consisted of Tripitaka and his disciples moving across borders between four continents in the Buddhist cosmos, traversing the oceans and the lands, and crossing the boundaries of human realm into Heaven and the Hell. *JW* also shows that this Buddhist universalism has to be reiterated constantly in almost every chapter through the monks' magical combats between Taoists and demons at one of the numerous nodules on their traveling route. Their final conversion to Buddhism or return back to the hierarchy of the Heavenly ranks indicate the full closure and containment of this universalism. But this Buddhist universalism overlays with imperial universalism because this religious hierarchy refracts the hierarchical empire based upon kinship. No one is the real "other;" the worst demon is

Appropriating *JW*'s literary paradigm in which both world systems overlap each other, *SVW* expands and heightens the vision of the Sino-centric world system by making the Sino-centric order the primary cosmos that contains the Buddhist vision. Thus, *SVW* is a hybrid romance that integrates elements of a magic-travel romance with tropes of military romance whose momentum is driven precisely by such Confucian morality as loyalty and filial piety. Traveling in a military romance is a sprawling and self-expanding network--the heroes have to take infinite round-trips between borders and capital center to fight against the enemies for territories again and again. Sometimes they lose the battles, and sometimes they win. Traveling in magic-travel romance, on the other hand, has only one linear route. There is only one final grand return after years of journeying abroad. At every point along their traveling route, they must win and convert their enemies.

Like *JW*, *SVW* has only one lineal route. It describes the Chinese armada's maritime arrivals and departures from one foreign state to another, resembling an imaginary journey sojourning in the archipelago of exotic cities and towns. The armada has been to 18 major countries, and a variety of minor states and villages in the *xifan* 西番 region called West Aparagodānīya in the fiction, following faithfully the historical itineraries of Zheng He's thirty some stops in the Indian Ocean. The furthest places the fleets have been are the seaports of Hormuz and Aden on the Persian Gulf, and the littoral city Mecca on the Red Sea.²¹⁵ but crossing over the Western ocean here delivers the

²¹⁵ Some other countries are the author's fabrication. Despite the more omnipresent fantasized countries in the genre of magic-travel romance such as Country of Women and the Infernal Hell, the fantasized countries to the best of my knowledge are: the Country of Gold Eyes (金眼國), Baida State (白達國), Wusili State (勿斯裏國), Jicini State (吉慈尼國), Maliban State (麻裏板國), Lifa State (黎伐國), Safa State (撒髮國), Xigela State (吸葛刺國), Mugu State (木骨國), the Country of Silver Eyes (銀眼國).

Buddhist concept of “crossing to the other shore” (du bi’an 渡彼岸) that suggests nirvana. Yet like *RNS*, the purpose of the maritime trip is out of loyalty to the emperor who desires to look for the lost imperial jade seal in the Western oceans, a commonplace emblem of centralized political power, symbolizing the Ming empire’s ideal identity as an expansionist empire, in the Western oceans. The birth of the main hero Bifeng monk from West Aparagodānīya where Buddhas live to South Jambūdvīpa where China is located, is for the purpose of assisting Zheng He to fulfill the imperial mission.

SVW juxtaposes the Buddhist division of the cosmos with ethnographical and geographical knowledge of the Western Ocean and the Western regions in the late Ming to create a distinctive fictional space. The Western ocean is not only located in the West Aparagodaniya, but is a realm where one can seek auspicious jades and exotica. The very idea of looking for the imperial jade seal in the Western Ocean is derived from the Ming belief that fine jades come from the Ocean. An anecdote in the Ming tells that the Great Ming imperial jade seal is indeed carved from a precious jade from the seas sold by a foreign merchant.²¹⁶ Further, following the late Ming perception that treats the Western Ocean and the Western regions collectively as representing the West, the narrator fuses the West Aparagodaniya with the Western Ocean and the Western regions to create the essential binary of the West and the East in *SVW*. Thus, the Javanese in *SVW* are depicted as Muslims or Persians: “Deep-set eyes, broom-like eyebrows, a high nose, curly hairs” (兜凹眼, 掃帚眉, 高鼻子, 卷毛鬚). This is historically correct not only because the Javanese was perceived as part of the people from the West, but many Javanese were Muslims as detailed in many historical and geographical accounts in the late Ming. *SVW*

²¹⁶ See Zhu Guozhen’s 朱國禎 *Yongzhuang xiaoping* 湧幢小品 in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995-1999).

also makes Mazu Goddess (tianfei 天妃 or Mazu 媽祖) the goddess of the Western Ocean, a maritime deity that protected mariners and maritime merchants on China seas and the Indian ocean since the Song.

SVW's narrator also interweaves his fictionalization of the ocean with some of the late Ming legends about the magical locales on the seas. For instance, *SVW* details how the itinerary of a boat from the seaport of Nanjing to West Aparagodaniya begins at the Red River, then continues to the White Dragon River, the soft-water sea, and the Magnet Strait. While the White Dragon River is fabrication, the Magnet Strait is a zone in the South Sea that was recorded widely in the late Ming as having magnet stones under the water that would gravitate ships to the bottom of the seas. Its accurate position is said as "to the east of Nanwang, between the valleys and the cliffs," or in the Indian ocean.²¹⁷ To prevent a boat from sinking, sailors would bind all the nails on the ships with ropes made of coconut fibers, or replace the iron nails with bamboo ones. Moreover, the "soft-water sea" also is derived from the Ming concept of the Western Ocean that which can be divided into two portions: the land western ocean and the watery western ocean.

That *SVW* as a hybrid fiction is also represented by the main character Jin Bifeng 金碧峰 or the Bifeng monk whose ethnical traits embody the conflicts and connections between the genres of magical-travel romance and military romance. Even after he is reincarnated as a human, his essential self not only remains as a Buddhist deity, a savior, but also an inborn foreigner. Besides his blue eyes and high nose, the thick beard that is not shaved during his ceremony indicates the fixation of racial traits in his image. On the one hand, these physical traits are described in a mixed conventional vocabulary on

²¹⁷ See *Haidao yizhi* 海島逸志, *Zhongguo Yindu jianwen lu* 中國印度見聞錄, *Nanzhou yiwu zhi* 南洲異物志, *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答, and *Wuli xiaoshi* 物理小識.

Persian, Arabian, or Islamic monks instead of Indian monks whose broad shoulders and big feet are often emphasized in Chinese accounts. In effect, some scholars argue that the Bifeng monk is derived from the Tibetan monk Halima 哈立麻, the Yongle emperor's Buddhist teacher.²¹⁸

Discussions of omens, fate, exotic animals, plants, and goods, monsters, and foreign civilizations abound, almost upon every landing, a magical war would be initiated between the aboriginal and the Chinese who both implement magical weapons and devices in the campaigns. Victory unexceptionally goes to the Chinese, with the indigenous rulers offering precious tributes and a written statement of submission, and admitting that the Chinese emperor is the predominant ruler in the world. Not surprisingly, the longest battle is set in Java. After stopping by Mecca, the troupe eventually reaches the infernal hell, the edge of the world, where they are judged by the King Yama. They quickly return to China. It has been more than seven years. The seal is not found despite all the efforts made; the tributes are presented to the emperor who dismisses them as trivial and useless but he holds in high regard the western foreign countries. Temples to commemorate the event are erected.

Like its predecessor *JW*, *SVW* is written with tremendous pleasure of experiencing a vicarious journey: a journey that re-imagines Zheng He's voyages in the vocabulary of magical contests and travel narrative. But unlike *JW*'s hyper-inventive imagination of adventures through verbal jokes and intricate plot that enables the fiction to be completely devoid of most historical facts, *SVW*'s insufficient imagination and creativity give rise to the farcical and cursory fabrication of the storyline. The lack of imagination

²¹⁸ For a conjecture that Jin Bifeng is the literary image of Halima, see Feng Hanyong 馮漢鏞, "Xiyang ji fawei" 西洋記發微, *Mingqing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究, no. 7.

also involves massive citations and awkward rephrasing from *Yingya shenglan*, *Xiyang fanguo zhi* 西洋番國志, and *Xingcha shenglan*.²¹⁹ Perhaps, like most of *shenmo xiaoshuo*, *SVW* was written for commercial purposes, composed in a very short time, just for a quick sale. The very mixed pleasure of writing and reading about magical battles and imagining Zheng He's maritime expeditions, however, is strong enough to carry the entire story from its beginning to the end.

In *JW*, each character is invested with religious meaning so that the entire journey of conquering demons functions as an allegory of the self-cultivating process of the mind, the circulation of the *qi* through various joints and bowels in the meditating body to achieve final enlightenment. Thus, each magical battle can be interpreted allegorically. Devoid of such profound religious meaning, *SVW* shows that magical combats can be a process of territorization, dominion, and proprietorship. The very narrative trope in military romances, battle arrays or *zhen*, that has similar symbolism of territorial possession is juxtaposed in *SVW* with the trope of possessing magical objects that is begun in *JW*.

That is, the fundamental source of power of the invincible navy army of Zheng He in *SVW* lies in their ability to grasp objects, in particular, to discern, employ, and procure "treasure" or *baobei* 寶貝, the capability that convoys the warships across the tempestuous ocean. These *baobei* or treasured objects are mainly in three categories, magical weapons, imperial jade seal, and tributes. They indicate a lack of interiority in *SVW*, that is, a lack of characterizing and building subjects in the fiction, or a tendency to objectify subjects. Instead of concentrating on characterizing fighters, the narrator takes

²¹⁹ For a study of how *SVW* cites and copies from the three travelogues, see Ma Youheng's 馬幼恆 "Sanbao taijian xiyangji yu Xiyang fanguo zhi" 《三寶太監西洋記》與《西洋番國志》 at <http://www.cciv.cityu.edu.hk/publication/jiuzhou/txt/13-6-2.txt>.

great interest in individualizing their military equipment. Every weapon with its special name is the unique signature of its owner. From the names of the arms such as the Magical Spear of Nine Meters (zhangba shenqiang 丈八神枪) and the Sword with Phoenix and Swan Feathers (xiufeng yanling dao 綉鳳雁翎刀), one can relate to their user. All the faith that the characters have in their personal weapons labels them as “treasure” and making them part and parcel of the possessors. To defeat a rival is therefore to destroy his weapon. As a Chinese soldier flouts, “He claims that his weapon is a treasure, we then must ruin his treasure” 他說道是個寶貝，我們偏要壞他的寶貝 (222). Consequently, the characters’ endearment to their military apparatus corresponds to the devastating power and magic innate in the material. A pair of swords can fly like shooting stars; a bell can sabotage human bowels, a monastery receptacle can contain all the seawater, and a flag can overthrow the cosmos.

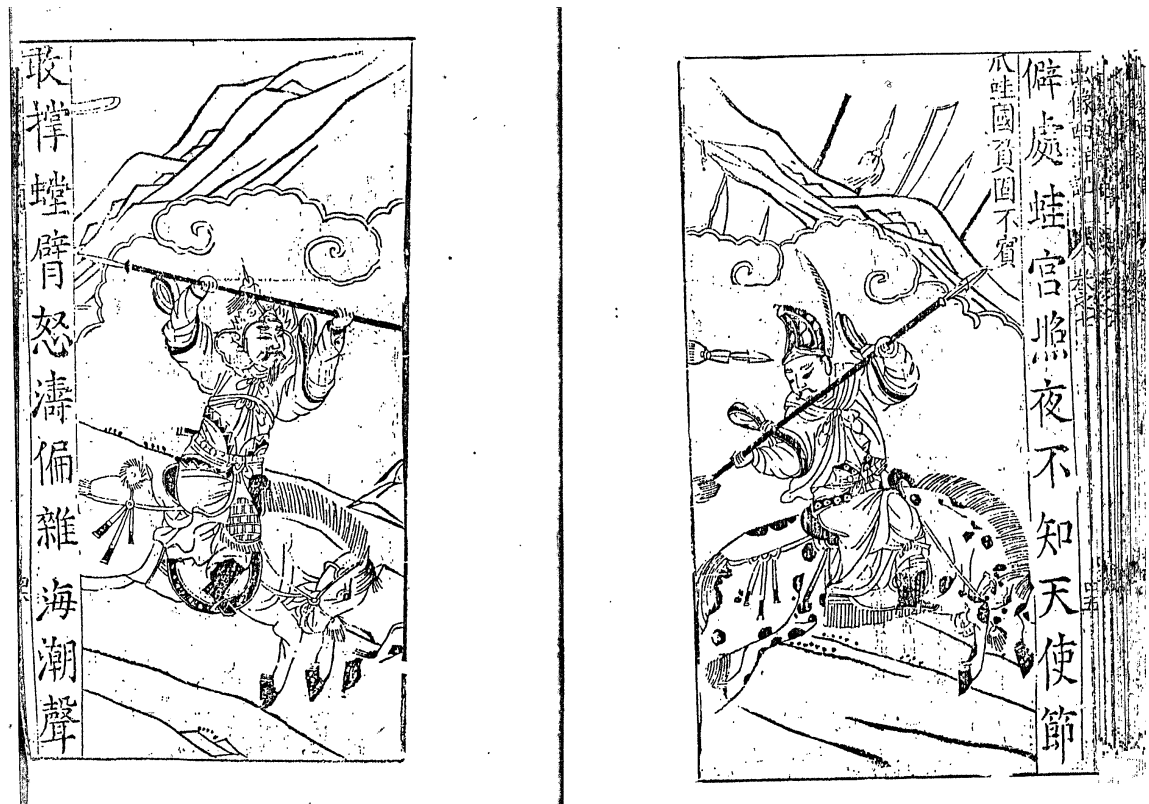


Figure 5.4: late Ming illustration to the episode on Java. General Fish Eyeballs is on the right while General Ma on the left. The subtitle reads: “the country of Java stubbornly resists to surrender: the Palace of Frogs in the remote region is dark in the night without knowing the envoys of the heavenly state. How dare they

The hyperbolic magical prowess of material objects in *SVW* is projected onto the barbarian lands and barbarians, raising the question about how the Chinese subject is related to the barbarian Other in *SVW*. The episode on Java represents most elaborately such perspective on barbarians. In chapter 34, the narrator creates a Javanese general General Fish Eyeballs (yuyan jiangjun 魚眼將軍) nicknamed Gnaw Sea Dry (yaohaigan 咬海干).

他在海裡，出入波濤，如履平地。他在陸路上，騎一匹紅鬃馬，使一桿三股叉，還有三枝飛標，百步內取人首級，百發百中。有千合死戰之能，有萬夫不當之勇。

He swims in the oceanic waves as if walking on a leveled ground, and rides a red-haired horse on the land with a long fork and three daggers. He can decapitate enemies from a hundred steps away. His shooting rate is a hundred percent correctness. He can fight in millions of battles and is as brave as ten thousands men.

General Fish Eyeballs is dispatched by the Javanese king to destroy the Chinese armada upon hearing about its arrival at Java. it is because the Javanese king learns from Xie Wenbin 謝文彬--a Ming literatus of Tingzhou who later became a salt merchant living in Siam in history²²⁰ is appropriated by the narrator as the murderer of the Chinese envoys to impart information about Sino-Javan incidents into the narrative--that the Chinese army is deprived of morality.

“謝文彬誑言我們寶船一千餘號，戰將一千餘員，大兵百十餘萬，沿途上貪人財貨，利人妻女，弱儒者十室九空，強硬者十存八九，故此他的國王說道：‘南兵不仁不義，不可輕放過。’”

“Xie Wenbin lies that our treasure fleets, more than one thousand ships, some one thousand generals, and millions of soldiers, along our route, we lust for people’s wealth and goods, their wives and daughters. We hoax and bully nine of ten weak people, and we leave nine of ten tough men untouched. Therefore, the Javanese king says, ‘the Chinese army is neither benevolent, nor righteous. We should not easily let them go.’”

From the perspective of a Chinese traitor, this excuse projects a mirroring image of barbarians and a demoralized barbaric state onto the Chinese empire. Combined with the historical reasons that the Javanese have killed Chinese envoys in the Hongwu and Yongle reigns, these rationalities become the motivation for a war between the Chinese and the Javanese led by General Fish Eyeballs. The narrator further blurs the boundary between Chinese and Javanese through his depiction of their appearances and conversations. During the first round of duels between Chinese general Ma and General Fish Eyes, the narrator describes general Ma as “this general Ma’s facial features are not born very properly, and his voice and tones are violent and aggressive” 這馬將軍本等眉

²²⁰ See Mao Ruizheng 茅瑞徵, *Huangming xiangxu lu* 皇明象胥錄 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997) 37. 213

眼兒生得有些不打當，聲氣兒又來得凶。 Then the narrator makes a dialogue between

Fish Eyeballs and General Ma:

咬海干說道：“你既是南朝，我是西土，我和你各守一方，各居一國，你無故侵犯我的疆界，是何道理？”馬將軍道：“我無事不到你西洋夷地，一則是我大明皇帝新登大寶，傳示你們夷邦；二則是探問我南朝的傳國玉璽，有無消息；三則是你叢爾小蠻，敢無故要殺我南朝的天使，又一次敢無故要殺我南朝的隨行從者百七十人。”

Gnaw Sea Dry says, “you are the Dynasty of the South (China), and we are the Western regions, we each occupy a territory and live in a different country. Why do you invade our borders for no reason?” General Ma says, “we do not come to your barbarian lands of the Western Ocean out of no reason. First, our Great Ming emperor just ascended to the throne, so we need to pronounce his enthronement to you barbarian states. Second, we are here to seek our imperial jade seal and to learn its whereabouts from you. Third, you are the smallest barbarian country, how could you murder our Chinese missionary and for no reason kill our one hundred seventy envoys?

To ask for a jade seal from foreign states is itself a metaphor imbued with political implications. The Chinese phrase *xiaoxi* 徼璽 (hand in the jade seal) commonly used ever since the Spring and Autumn period conveys the meaning that the lesser states surrender their seals to procrastinate themselves in front of the more powerful state. To ask for the Chinese imperial jade seal from foreign states here is a pretext to conquer foreign states so as to assert the Chinese imperial image. Ma also clarifies that this battle simultaneously serves as revenge against the murders of the Chinese envoys in Java in history.

I have analyzed earlier that unlike its historiographical counterparts in which literati only manipulate narratives through rearranging the cause and effect of events and rendering discursive comments such as a subjunctive tense to re-imagine history, *SVW* radically subverts history by inscribing vengeance and retribution towards the people from the Indian Ocean onto its fictional narration of history. Also unlike the historiographies in which Chinese priority is always fortified, *SVW*, through the words of

the Javanese, represents a corrupt and demoralized Chinese empire, mirroring a barbaric state.

In order to defeat the Javanese, this Chinese empire utilizes two fancy magical weapons: the seventy-two Subduing-Tiger-Vanquishing-Dragon-Eight-Hook Iron Pawls 俘虎降龍八爪抓 of great flexibility in extending and folding and the Aqua Mice 水老鼠, the underwater ordnance that can chase after destined targets. The bloody genocide kills 500 Javanese swimming soldiers, and in triumph, the Chinese soldiers slaughter and cook the flesh of 3,000 soldiers of the Javanese navy army. Cannibalism is described simply as a triumphant signal, replete with a sense of fulfilling satisfaction while completely dismissing Confucian morality that the Chinese armada has claimed as central to Chinese civilization.

While the Chinese empire resembles no more than magical weapons devoid of Confucian morality, human emotions, and rationality, the barbarian is proficient in witchcraft. The narrative continues that General Fish Eyeballs, on the road to ask for help from Java's neighboring countries, encounters Witch Wang (Wang shengu 王神姑) from the country of Bolin 淳淋國. Like other female warriors, a literary trope that is best established in *RNS*, Witch Wang forces herself to marry General Fish Eyeballs who in order to rescue his country agrees to the marriage. In Chapter 2, I have analyzed that chaste and loyal female warriors are continuously highlighted in military romances while they are assimilated into the empire-wide heterogeneous military community through marriage so as to reconcile the tension between the family and the state. The very elaboration of Witch Wang's marriage to the Javanese general implies that such an empire-wide community could exist equally well outside China. Witch Wang's alliance

with Java resembles the tributary relationship Java maintained with China. Witch Wang offers her skills in exchange for her marriage, while the King of Java offers tributes to exchange Chinese goods. If the Chinese rely on the Javanese for internal consumption of exotica, then the Javanese too rely on their subordinating state Bolin for internal pacification. This notion of relativism indicates that it is Java rather than China that is at the center of the world in this episode of *SVW*.

But unlike Mu Guiying as well as her female in-laws of the Yang family who is depicted as a loyal and filial subject, Witch Wang is no more than an object, a personification of witchcraft. She vows with faith in her equipment: “Assisted with my horse running lightening and wind, assisted with my sword flying like the sun and the moon, even if it is the vast West Ocean, I will split up an avenue; even if it is a silver mountain of iron fruits, I will also thrust it through” 憑著我坐下的閃電追風馬，憑著我手裡的雙飛日月刀，饒他就是西洋大海，我也要蕩開他一條大路；饒他就是鐵果銀山，我也要戳透他一個通明 (360). In her rivalry with Wolf Teeth Zhang 張狼牙, she creates many illusory selves to bewitch him. For many times he thinks that he has decapitated her, the head turns out to be either an earthy statue or a trunk root. The dramatic moment comes with the appearance of altogether 72 identical Witch Wangs, the number of which corresponds with the 72 Iron Pawls. The encircling bewildered audience discusses and postulates on the question of whether the women are real or not. Two officials with a spear poke the legs of a couple to test whether they have flesh-blood bodies and they both bleed; an antique connoisseur sings a love song to test their romantic desire as part and parcel of a human, but the 72 all react passionately. Neither standard that the audience applies to the women can be account for accurate measurement

for identifying an individual, a unified and self-enclosed self. One contrast should be noted. Whereas the officials suppose that only one is possibly real, the antique connoisseur purports the possibility that all the seventy-two women are authentic. His sensitive response makes the 72 identical women a metaphor for the commercialization of works of art in the late Ming—mass production.

What *SVW* has suggested by far is the possibility of imagining the world out of mass production, a world where no one is individual and everyone is similar and unidentifiable. The possibility of this wonderland where everything is physically and mentally identical is confirmed in the words of the 72 Witch Wangs:

彼此你中國五百年生出七十二個賢人；我西洋不讀書，不知道理，五百年就生出我們七十二個女將。彼此你中國七十二賢人，聚在一門門下；我西洋七十二女將，出在一個胞胎。彼此俱是一理。(379)

You Chinese within five hundred years gave birth to seventy-two sages; we barbarians do not read and do not understand the principles, so within five hundred years, we seventy-two female warriors came into being. Your seventy-two sages gathered together to follow Confucius's teaching; we seventy-two female warriors are born from the same egg. You and us follow the same principle.

“The same principle” shared between the two societies indicates the existence of a universalism like the searching for the presumably existing universal measurement of an individual. In this case, the universal rule is that the seventy-two talents will be born to every society in every five hundred years. The number 72 as an auspicious number seems to have its teleological repercussion in the world history, as Victor Mair has discerned,²²¹ but this universal number cannot prevent the women from spontaneously considering themselves as the inferior disparate Others as shown by the contrast between them as

²²¹ Victor Mair, “The North(west)ern Peoples and the Recurrent Origins of the ‘Chinese’ State.” In Joshua A. Fogel, ed. *The Teleology of the Modern Nation-State: Japan and China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) 70-72.

mere physical entities and the Confucian apotheoses as intellectuals produced through intellectual cultivation. In effect, the racism underlying Witch Wang's self-depreciation emphasizes the self-other dichotomy as the polarity of intellectuality and physicality.

The 72 women warriors are all paper cutouts of Witch Wang's sleight of hand. Witch Wang continues to create illusions to entrap Taoist Zhang until she finally collapses under the increasingly heavier beaded Buddhist necklace of Taoist Zhang, a *deus ex machina*. The Chinese release Witch Wang on the condition that she will go back to persuade the Javanese to surrender to China. As a loyal subject of the Javanese king and her Javanese husband, Witch Wang eats her words which, according to her vow, will be published by being tramped into "flesh mud" (rouni 肉泥). After a long round of asking for helps from her teachers, Witch Wang is eventually defeated and tramped into "flesh mud."



Figure 5.5: late-Ming illustration of the episode on Witch Wang's 72 transformations, reprint.

The narrator continues the story by telling that a spy disguised Witch Wang tries to convince the Java king and the officials to submit to China. Witch Wang forever is remembered by her husband, her king, and her countrymen as a traitor, a *maiguo zei* 賣國賊. But this treacherous image is not a real Witch Wang. She has not betrayed her husband or her countrymen who detest treason equally as the Chinese. In effect, Witch Wang has risked her own life by making a deadly vow in order to defend them. In *SVW*, her individuality that is very much related to her loyalty to differentiate herself from her many counterfeits, and *has to* be obsolete since it is natural for an exotic self to be assumable and usurpable, to become a traitor rather than a patriot. Relegating Witch Wang to the lowest as a traitor of her family, and her state is the necessary and satiable denouement of *SVW*.

The narrative violence of *SVW* that represents a merciless Chinese empire that is no more than a killing machine bespeaks a rather perverse narrator who simply imparts his own prejudiced and almost sadistic emotions into his storytelling. This is one of the major reasons that *SVW* has been constantly condemned as bad literature, a failed work.²²² Nonetheless, what Luo Maodeng has exposed is his hybrid romance is a main narrative perversion that is perhaps inherent in the generic institution itself. What differentiates *JW* from *SVW* is not only that the demons and the barbarians in *JW* are not

²²² The plot is absurd and its rhetoric unpolished to late Qing classic and literary scholar Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821-1907), its literary jokes are tediously superficial to historian Xiang Da 向達 (1900-1966), and it does not have any “artistic value” (yishu jiazhi 藝術價值) as judged by drama critic and historian Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 (1902-1985). See Appendixes to *Sanbao taijian xiyang ji tongshu yanyi* 三寶太監西洋記通俗演義, ed. Lu Shulun 陸樹崙 and Zhu Shaohua 竺少華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985) 1289-1333. For major studies on *SVW*, see, Roderich Ptak, *Cheng Hos Abenteuer im Drama und roman der Mingzeit. Hsia Hsi-yang: Eine Übersetzung und Untersuchung. Hsi-yang chi: Ein Deutungsversuch. Münchener Ostasiatische Studien Band 41* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 1986).

killed, or not discriminated. It is because *JW* constantly sublimates that very deadlock antagonism inherent in the genre into verbal jokes and avoids discussions of loyalty, the state, and most importantly, a lack of consciousness of the true existence of an enemy. Therefore, *SVW*'s very lack of the lubricating effects of humor and the freedom from concerns of the state reveals the very bones of the genre: the very antagonism between “us” and “them.”

At the end of the episode, Zheng He kills General Fish Eyeballs, flagellates the Javanese officials for their malpractices and demands the Javanese king write a confession to avow his faults of killing the envoys, merging east Java, and most of all revolving against the Chinese troupe, and to pledge to go to China by himself to pay tributes to the emperor as an apology. In the country of Bolin, Zheng He's decapitation of Chen Zuyi who is described as a private plundering at the Old Port is phrased by the narrator as to get ride of a “public evil” (gong'e 公惡) as opposed to “using the official power to avenge personal grudges” (gongbao sichou 公報私仇) that the army has just done in Java. What the narrator has implied perhaps is this cathartic function of his narration.

But what is this *sichou*, private grudges, for the narrator that he feels must compensate through telling a vengeful story about the Chinese state's encounter with Java? In the infernal Hell, a large group of wondering ghosts consisting of animals, soldiers, and women--altogether 32 groups--come to Judge Cui 崔判 to accuse Zheng He and his armada for their genocide. Among them, the three thousand Javanese soldiers who have been eaten by the Chinese, Witch Wang, and General Fish Eyeballs show up to

plead for justice. Judge Cui dismisses the crowd by determining that their wrongful deaths were a retribution of the wrong deeds they have conducted in their earlier lives. But at the end, there are still five ghosts who stay, claiming that Judge Cui's judgements are not fair. These five ghosts ask what they have done wrong to fight for their countries when their countries are facing great disasters upon the arrival of the Chinese armada.

崔判官道：“南人何曾滅人社稷，吞人土地，貪人財貨，怎見得勢如累卵之危？”姜老星道：“既是國勢不危，我怎肯殺人無厭？”判官道：“南人之來，不過一紙降書，便自足矣，他何曾威逼於人？都是你們偏然強戰。這不是殺人無厭麼？”咬海幹道：“判官大人差矣！我爪哇國五百名魚眼軍，一刀兩段；三千名步卒，煮做一鍋。這也是我們強戰麼？”判官道：“都你們自取的。”

Judge Cui says, “when did the Chinese destroy your states, merge your territories, take away your goods? How could you say that you are facing a peril that is as dangerous as stacking eggs?” Old Star Jiang says, “if there was no danger to my country, how did I kill lives ceaselessly?” Judge says, “when the Chinese came, all you were supposed to do is a piece of surrender paper. When did they threaten you? It was all because you insisted to fight. Isn't this your murderous nature?” Gnaw Sea Dry says, “you are wrong, judge! In Java, five hundred fish-eye soldiers were cut into pieces. Three thousand navy soldiers were boiled into broth! Is this also because we insisted to fight?” Judge says, “this is all your fault!”

The dialogue bespeaks an awareness that the fictionalization of Zheng He's voyages to sublimate personal frustration to stories of avenging the Javanese has to utilize military violence in the fiction which in effect infringes on Confucian diplomacy, “cherishing men from afar.” Yet the narrator fails to make the point of the necessity of war. He only defends Chinese chauvinism by explaining it through the notion of Buddhist karmic retribution and a perverse racist prejudice that barbarians are violent and ferocious. The obviously perverse judgement of Judge Cui incurs the five ghosts to rebel, screaming about his discrimination and injustice-- *si 私*.

What is most interesting about this dialogue is that even for a cursory project like *SVW*, it still preserves the fundamental function of the fiction as dialogical and

negotiable. In “Discourse in the Novel,” Mikhail M. Bakhtin has explained that the distinctive feature of the novelistic form as a genre requires various individual voices from different social strata and of different “social heteroglossia” to construct a “structured artistic system.”²²³ Bakhtin emphasizes that language can be further stratified because language means differently to different addressee in different time and space. Thus the more advanced the novel, the utterance of the dialogism is more precise, and ultimately, in “subatomic levels” (300). That is, Bakhtin believes that language is fundamentally and internally dialogic, and the life of language lies in its heterogeneous nature. Language is dialogic precisely because of the elastic relationship between the word and its object (the signifier and the signified), between the word and its addresser, and between the word and its addressee.

What *SVW* has achieved through its staging of a dialogue between the narrator self as embodied in Judge Cui and the narrator’s other--his characters--is made possible through juxtaposing a concluding scene in the Hell to the linear travel narrative that is established by *JW*. This concluding scene corresponds to the joke of the blank sutras in *JW* at the end of the pilgrimage. They both have subversive characteristic in terms of making a reflection or a sharp relief of what has been narrated. Whereas *JW*’s joke is described carefully to play with the reader’s expectations of a pilgrimage, *SVW*’s ending is mechanical and didactic, completely ignoring what the reader would expect of it. While *JW* is not a novel for its final containment of that very universalism and homogeneity, *SVW* fails to be a well-crafted novel or romance precisely because of the narrator’s lack of consciousness to the addressee. The heteroglossia only is represented as a simply and

²²³ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (University of Texas Press, 2011) 264-300.
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stark opposition between “us” and “them,” so much so that the other’s vocabulary merely negates that of the self because the other is a copy of the self. In this sense, the Chinese state in the words of the Javanese is the mirror image of the barbaric state, and Java is the mirror image of China as the center of the world. The harsh deaths of Witch Wang, General Fish Eyeballs, and many Javanese soldiers are only a simple manifestation of the abrupt self-other antagonism.

In the chilling fall of 1597 ACE, 10,000 men perished while the Joseon (1392-1897) and Ming (1368-1644) Chinese allied forces besieging the sixteen thousand Japanese soldiers at Tosan during Hideyoshi (1536-1598)’s second invasion of Korea.²²⁴ 970 kilometers south to the Korean Peninsula in the city of Nanjing in the east coast of Ming China. Bad omens on the northeastern seas were omniscient,²²⁵ as incessant bad news about the warfare came out from the newspapers.²²⁶ Vigilant insecurity about the Wanli emperor and his ministers arose. In his preface, Luo Maodeng claims that Hideyoshi’s invasion is the reason of his composition of *SVW*.

It is likely to be so. Luo Maodeng first presents the flaw of *SVW* by imagining a debater. Not only the fiction on the tributes collected in maritime adventures is as redundant as a lump on the skin (zhuiyou 贅疣), the debater says, and its sources based

²²⁴ For a survey of Hideyoshi’s invasions of Korea, especially his second one, historically named Chongyu charan 丁酋再亂, see *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 8: the *Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644*, part 2.

²²⁵ Natural disasters and warfares were traditionally considered as heavenly judgement on the rulership of the emperor. About the dissemination of knowledge through dibao in Ming society, see Yin Yungong’s 尹韻公 *Zhongguo mingdai xinwen chuanbu shi* 中國明代新聞傳布史 (Chongqing, 1990).

²²⁶ “二十五年八月，倭破朝鮮開山南原等處，楊元首南京被圍。所統遼東官兵並家丁共三千余名，俱覆沒。”
“二十五年八月 倭據朝鮮全度，總督邢介報稱朝鮮南原全州已失，倭勢甚大，該國官民紛逃散，漸遺空城。”“二十五年九月，倭入朝鮮公州，犯稷山全恙等處。” See *Wanli dichao* 萬曆邸鈔 (Nanjing: jiangsu guangling chubanshe, 1991) 1063, 1065.

upon “weedy unofficial history” (*baiguan yeshi* 稗官野史) is as unbelievable as “food for ears” (*ershi* 耳食), but its theme of conquering and slaughtering barbarians defies the principle of benevolence whereby the Confucian ruler governs the world. Luo Maodeng argues back that demonstrating power (*xuanwei* 宣威) is in effect essential for the founding rulers of the dynasty, just as expansion is to be restrained by successors of the empire. He extrapolates that the Japanese invasion of Korea signals a far less dominant Ming state in the Wanli reign than the Han empire when all central Asian states paraded to exhibit tributes in the court. Since the exultant image of Zheng He could no longer reappear and be recognized in his day, what a man could do is mere ruminating the past while rubbing on his slack thighs. The Chinese sense of irretrievable time flux mixed with anxieties over dynastic decline. Much as the pair of slack thighs implies the Wanli era as a futile man being reminded by the Japanese menace that he is not as competent in horseback battles as before, the lump on the skin signifies the obscure politics of telling tribute offering in time of decadence. Prompted by the Japanese peril in Ming China’s tribute state which already tarnished the image of the empire, Luo Maodeng’s recall of the strong spirit of adventure of “the conquest generation” might incite his readers into envisioning a return to a strengthened empire.

Lu Xun 鲁迅 is the first modern Chinese scholar who commented on *SVW*:

蓋鄭和之在明代，名聲赫然，為世人所樂道，而嘉靖以後，倭患甚殷，民間傷今之弱，又為故事所囿，遂不思將帥而思黃門，集俚俗傳聞以成此作。²²⁷

It was because Zheng He in the Ming dynasty was famous and well-discussed by the people. In the Jiajing reign, the Japanese piracy was quite rampant. People were sad

²²⁷ Lu Xun 鲁迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/25559>.

about the weakness of the Ming, but was indulgent in the glorious story of the past. So they did not think about military strategies but witchcraft and collected all the anecdotes and hearsay to compose the fiction.

What is interesting in Lu Xun's notion is he regards the narrator's nostalgia as the emotional reason of why *SVW* tells the story in the form of magical battles and fantasy rather than realism. In effect, *shenmo xiaoshuo*, as a type of fantasy fiction, has always been regarded as an escapist genre, deviating from direct confrontation with reality. But Lu Xun's comments also divulges his anxieties over traditional Chinese fiction as a symbol of a stagnant imperial China and Confucian civilization that is separated from modern science and democracy--most desired by revolutionary thinkers of the early 20th century.

On the other hand, the afterlife of *SVW* is always intertwined with a consciousness about China's position in the world at the maritime borders. The mysterious and legendary image of Zheng He is a source of inspiration and confirmation about China's maritime strength. The fiction has been prized for its inclusion of Zheng He's stories unseen in official historiography and the travelogues composed by his Islamic interpreters. Its obvious traces of copying and pasting documents from those travelogues have made some scholars consider it a proofreading tool with which to correct mistakes in various extant editions of *Yingya shenglan*. The "rediscovery" of *SVW* in the early 20th century by Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821-1907) again coincided with an anxiety over a weakened China in the time of the Opium Wars with the Great Britain.²²⁸ Thus, seeking the historical truth of Zheng He's voyages through *SVW* represents a nationalist syndrome.

²²⁸ See Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, "Xiyang ji de kanke yu Ming Qing haifang weiwei zhong de Zheng He jiyi" 西洋記的刊刻與明清海防危機中的鄭和記憶, *Anhui daxue xuebao* 安徽大學學報 (2011:3) 11-21.

Liang Qichao 梁啟超, for instance, rediscovered the Chinese immigrants in Java and Sumatra, and praised them as exemplified national subjects. His re-imagining the Chinese people's oceanic experiences reaffirms the age-old Sino-centric order and creates a psychological strategy to confront the reality of maritime peril in his times.²²⁹

²²⁹See Jing Tsu's article "Extinction and Adventures on the Chinese Diasporic Frontier" in *Journal of Chinese Overseas* (2006: 2) v2. 247-268.

EPILOGUE

In this dissertation, I have analyzed three types of historical romances, military romances *RNS* and *RYF*, magic-travel romance *JW*, and “hybrid” romance *SVW*. Calling *SVW* a hybrid seems to simultaneously presume that the other two are not. In effect, all of them are heterogeneous in the sense that they accommodate and assimilate a wide range of literary forms, encompassing both high and low genres, into their narrative framework. *RNS* and *RYF* assimilate *zaju* drama, popular religious performances, and historiography; *JW* assimilates Mulian ritual drama, Buddhist salvation drama, Buddhist and Taoist scriptures, poetry, and daily-used encyclopedia.

Nonetheless, these historical romances form their distinctive vision of world order that no other literary forms can replace. These romances’ consistent storyline--a legendary general or monk from pre-late Ming Chinese history leads his armies or disciples through an epic military and magical campaign against their barbarian or demonic enemies--is not unseen in their literary and performative precursors such as ritual drama and *zaju* drama. What is quintessential of these romances is the commercialization of the stories on the one hand, and their establishing a new generic convention for latter full-length vernacular fiction to follow for hundreds of years on the other.

This underlying rampant commercialization in sixteenth-century China, especially in the *jiangnan* 江南 area, has been argued by scholars as a sign of a “burgeoning capitalism” that was connected to an emerging global economy. Paradoxically, this is also the time period when China was most inflicted with Japanese piracy, Mongol aggression, and other border issues. It is upon this transnational and global history that

the entire dissertation is based.

This commercial economy enters into the fictional space of the historical romances under my study. A new kind of universalism in the fiction, monetarism, is constantly joked about in *JW*, which only further reiterates its ontological existence in the fiction. Even though *SVW*, *JW*, *RNS*, and *RYF* all employ a certain Confucian or Buddhist worldview to frame their narration, which renders their narratives into either allegory, quasi-historiography, or political satire, commercialization and its relevant concepts inevitably become the most contesting opponent of these Confucian morales and religious ideologies. The result is a new type of narration. In *RNS*, there is a certain mechanical aesthetics and cliché vocabulary that harden the sentiments of loyalty as almost static and mechanical. In *JW*, the driving force for carnal desire, cannibalism, exogamous marriage, and magical battles also come down to tremendous pleasure of fetishizing (mainong 賣弄) objects, be they magical weapons, magical skills, food, or Tripitaka's flesh. In *SVW*, the anxieties over a threatened empire is directly linked to the anxieties over a highly commercialized society.

Thus, it is productive to focus on the tropes of exogamous desire, fetishism, and cannibalism to talk about communal and imperial identities. I have focused on the tropes of foreign princesses and undomestic women to marry Chinese and social elite men, and the trope of cannibalism as related to fetishism. I have discussed how the expansionist and fluid imagined community created by the fiction shared between the narrator and the reader conveys sentiments of proto-nationalism, imperialism, and pleasure. Further, contextualizing the fiction in its contemporary political discourses and its literary evolution in history, the dissertation concentrates on fictional images, i.e., religious

demons, and categories of barbarians. It argues that the historical romances have self-healing and self-assuring characteristics. They sublimate history into tales of triumphs, jokes, games, references, and historical reversions, and thus allow readers to imagine an invincible imperial history. This study brings into light the importance literature plays as a cultural response to China's long history of cross-border military and cultural encounters with her Eurasian neighbors.

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